

BEYOND

FANTASY FICTION

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CALL ME WIZARD By Evelyn E. Smith

G'RILLA By William Morrison

HALFWAY TO HELL By Jerome Bixby

EDITED BY
H. L. GOLD



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A.H.G.

R. CONRAD



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January, 1954 Vol. 1, No. 4

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Illustrated by ASHMAN

Call Me Wizard

By EVELYN E. SMITH

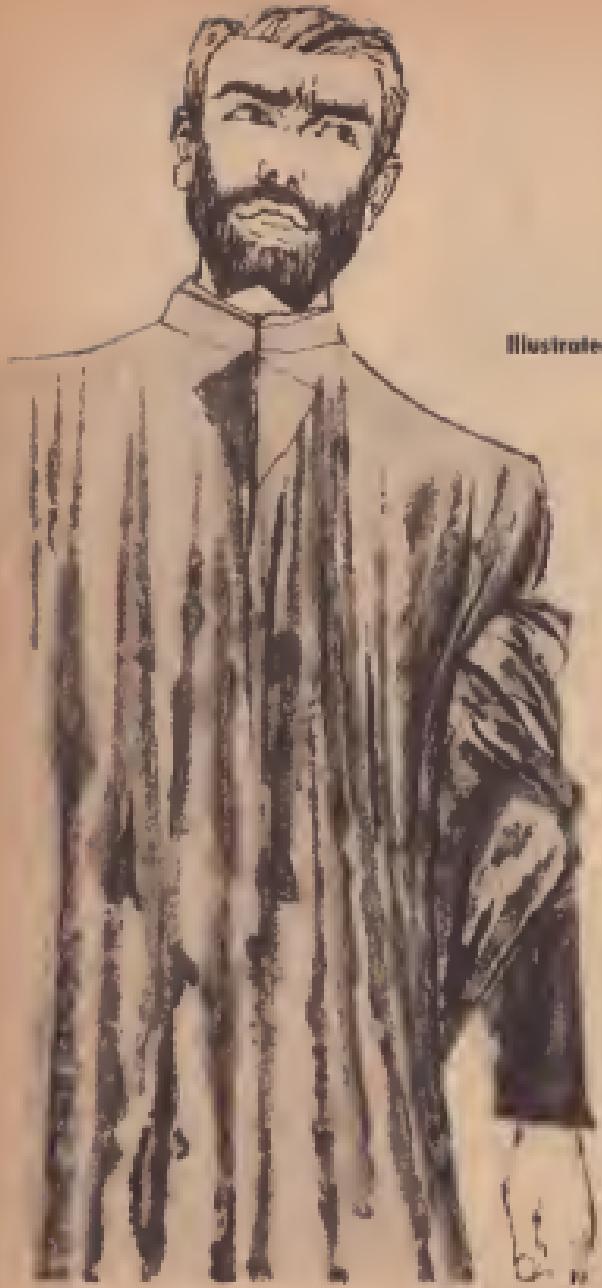
*Coveting someone's wife and place in the world
is an old, old story—except that the woman
and the place Philip covetted were his own!*

“WHAT are you doing, scroyle?” Dorothea demanded, brandishing her ladle. Her elongated shad-

ow cast on the wall by the leaping flames still gave Philip a tremor, although he'd been wed to the wench for nigh onto a decade.



CALL ME WIZARD



Illustrated by ASHMAN

BEYOND FANTASY FICTION

"You know right well 'tis you who should be a-mixing of this brew—'tis naught but a charm 'gainst the megrims, as any fool might contrive, for I ha' more weighty matters to which I should tend."

Philip had in truth been wondering why she had not noted his preoccupation afore. "Twas queer she had let him be without hindrance for so long a space of time. Could she be up to some deviltry of her own? No, not Dolly—deviltry she was capable of, right enough, but 'twas not like her to be secret about her actures. For whom had she to fear? There was no sorceress in the world who was her peer and, having a trace of royal blood in her veins, she was virtually above the law. Devil take the wench, why had he ever consented to espouse her? For 'twas monstrous hard to get shut of such a paragon.

"Jade me not, giglet!" he replied. "You're forever making plaint that I'm naught but a third-grade wizard! How can I pass the examination to better my rank if you'll not let me ply my own artifices?"

"Humph!" she sniffed, adding a pinch of powdered mummy to her brew. "Sith you're really desirous to be perfected in the mystical art, you could do no better than emulate me, 'stead of practicing your own paltry tricks—for, as all the world knows, I'm the most parlous

necromancer in the realm."

"In *this* realm," Philip spoke before he thought.

SHE stared at him, and he could not fathom the look in her flat yellow eyes. "In *any* realm, rag," quoth she. "What d'ye mean, '*this* realm'?"

Philip glanced down at the pipkin in which he was mingling his own modest concoction. "Marry, I've heard talk," he said, somewhat weakly, "that there are other realms of existence—outside this one. Aye, and that there have been those from this realm who have visited another—"

"Twaddle!" Dorothea retorted, bending over her cauldron so that her long red hair concealed her face. "You'll never make a wizard, dribbling, if you'll not learn to distinguish 'twixt superstition and sorcery. Not that I fancy you'll ever attain even second rank, poor natural. Sorcery's a woman's work—it takes more of a closeness to nature, a practicality, than you or most men own."

Philip merely grunted in reply, for he feared he had said overmuch already. Superstition, push! So there was something she did *not* know! He'd show the haggard wit-snapper the difference 'twixt superstition and sorcery! For had he not come across an antique volume that gave the very receipt for the changement of existences writ

out in black and white—with, moreover, the exact measurements for bat's blood and grated mandrake root and suchlike modern ingredients—and the proper spell to be chanted set down precisely in all the customary forms! And pictures, too, illustrating all these mysteries. Did that look like suspension, forsooth?

But he'd not tell her—let her discover it for herself when he was gone. Then she'd grieve over his loss when 'twould be too late. "Aye, weep your eyes out, my lady," he muttered. "I'll warrant me you'll ne'er find another spouse as lovesome as I—"

"Eh?" Dorothea queried.

"'Tis naught," he replied hastily. "Merely a spell I was running through."

"Well, hold it to yourself, else it'll mingle with mine and who knows what strange and unnatural forces it might unleash? Sorcery's a serious thing, rogue. Y'must not slubber it."

"Aye," he agreed. "'Twould not be well."

But it was not for that reason he assented. It was rather that he did not want her to hear the spell he was chanting. For once he had learned that they existed, he had searched the various realms of existence in his crystal—and found another Philip Gardner marvelously like himself.

Now he gazed into the crystal,

which he held concealed 'neath a fold of his pallament, and saw the image of his counterpart reflected therein. How frolicksome a jade was Nature—to fashion two men in the same assemblance, yet make one a handsome, hearty rogue and the other, though touch for touch the same fellow, a lank, pallid, peeled cullion.

PEELED . . . Philip felt his beard thoughtfully. Philip² had no beard—belike the poor twig was incapable of one. So his own brave valiance was like to prove monstrous awkward. For he could not remove it ere he left or Dorothea'd be sure to take notice and impeach his motives therefor. He'd have to get it off afterward and the same for his robes . . . mortal strange attire they flaunted in that other realm.

But now that he had both spells pat, he'd transfer himself there. He looked into the depths of his crystal. Marry, but that was a plausive dame with whom Philip² was holding parlance. For shame, the rudesby had made her weep! Let her but tarry a bit and her estate would be bettered.

"I'll consolate you, my pretty wench," Philip murmured.

"What?" Dorothea said sharply.

"I did not address you, kicksy-wicksy," he snarked. "I but spoke to myself. Must I crave your leave to soliloquize?"

"If y'addressed yourself as 'pretty wench,'" she retorted, "you're even scarcer of wit than I'd fancied . . . eh, Perkin?"

The cat miauéd. Always agreeing with her, Philip thought resentfully — smoothing her and soothing her. Well, she might be his superior in sorcery, but he had never stooped to fawning on her like Perkin. And let her see how she fancied this second Philip whom he was substituting for his own sweet self in this existence—the Philip who made women weep.

But what if she discovered forthwith that Phillip² was not her own lusty spouse? Impossible. Had she not said herself she placed no credence in the other realms of existence? And with his magical arts—for he had more doctrine than ever the proud-stomached wench had supposed—he'd alter the form of the false Philip to resemble himself, the veritable Philip, even more closely than Nature's original design.

"Here, Perkin," Dorothea commanded. "Lave me this crucible."

The cat obediently licked it clean with his tongue. *As I have been doing in essence for this many a year*, Philip thought. *But I'll be her pet domestic no longer. She never thought I'd have the audacity to quit her—that's twice she'll have been proved wrong. That is, if the spell does work . . .*

He checked to make sure he

had an ample store of the mixture, in case the need should arise for him to depart from the next realm of existence incontinently . . . and his crystal ball . . . and his pocket Grimoire. He decided he had all the equipment he required, thought, *Farewell, Doll—mayhap now you'll realize what a rare measure you had in me!*

And Philip disappeared from that realm of existence while Dorothea's back was turned. Her back was still turned when Philip² took his place.

THE transfer had been virtually instantaneous, so that Philip² was only just aware that something odd had happened to him. He had blacked out and there had been an odd rushing sound in his ears—Philip¹ passing him in infinity—and now here he was in a strange room. No, not wholly strange—although it was entirely different, except perhaps in dimensions, for some reason it reminded him of his own living room.

The furniture, so far as he could make it out in the half-darkness, was massive and ornate, unlike the chaste simplicity of his own Swedish modern. And the smell here was different, too—in fact, he had never been conscious of any odor at all in his own quarters, although, as a scientist, he realized that one was never conscious of

the distinctive odor of one's own person or one's own home—odors which have little to do with cleanliness or uncleanliness, but stem from variations in food habits, metabolism, cleansing agents and furniture polish.

In this room, it was impossible to avoid noticing an almost tangible cloud of what smelled like the more pungent chemicals, mixed with smoke, heavy perfume or incense, spices and a strong taint of decay. The fireplace in his living room had been a small genteel installation, used only for occasionally cultivating small genteel blazes designed solely for visual appeal.

Here was a huge fireplace, containing a roaring inferno that gave this room what little light it had. And there had certainly been neither a cauldron in his room nor a gaunt female figure in flowing robes stirring its contents and ululating pensively to herself: "Bat's blood, cat's blood, pickled capers—snake's tongue, drake's tongue, purge the vapors."

"There must be some logical reason for this," he told himself sternly, "as there is a reasonable explanation for everything. If I keep calm, I shall find out." He applied himself to calm thinking. "Since this lady is the only person in the room, she is the logical one to whom I should apply for information." An odd irrelevant

thought—it occurred to him that she looked like one of those sack-cloth-and-glamor witches drawn by that fellow Adams. Or was it Addams?

As he emerged into the ragged circle of light cast by the fire, the long amber eyes of the woman seemed to see for the first time. She was clearly not afraid. Her throaty contralto laughter played delicate arpeggios upon Philip's nerves. He couldn't help wondering whether, in the reversing roles of male and female that characterized the mid-Twentieth Century, he had not been the victim of a white slave gang. After all, his female students had found him attractive.

"I knew y'couldn't do it, geek!" the woman informed him with a visible gloat, waving her ladle in triumph. "Any fool could disappear for the matter of a minute, eh, Perkin?"

There was a yowl from the darkness where, beyond the reach of the firelight a pair of nitid green eyes regarded Philip² knowingly. It was only a black cat, virtually indistinguishable from the shadows, yet a memory of the stories he had read in his childhood before he decided that fiction was unworthy of the higher intellect stirred the hairs on the back of the man's neck.

"A witch," the memory whispered, "a witch and her familiar."

BUT this was absurd. He knew no such beings as witches existed. And why did he persist in feeling that, somehow, he was still in his own living room? Was all this his imagination? He had been studying too hard . . . overwork must have turned his brain. But one must be polite, even to the creations of one's own diseased brain.

"I—I beg your pardon, madam," he began, resisting the temptation to mop his brow, although the blast of heat that assailed him from the front provided ample justification. Behind him, cold lapped in icy waves at his spine. *It must be England*, he thought wildly. *No central heating.*

"Don't try your cozening airs on me, my lad!" the woman bawled, waving her ladle so carelessly that part of the liquid it contained spattered on the faded Saruk, leaving a charred black circle and a stench where it fell. "You've failed, jolthead," she went on with evident relish. "Now you'll not deny that I am arch-sorceress in this household or, in fact, any!"

"Madam," Philip² said, "I'm very much afraid you've mistaken me for someone else."

She stared at him. She was fairly young, he saw, and if the caroty hair that hung in elf-locks all around her thin face were arranged more becomingly, she might be rather attractive in an elegant

angular Vogneish sort of way, for all her lack of grooming.

"Is this some jape?" the woman demanded. "D'ye think to gull me into supposing you've indeed journeyed to another realm according to your fond conceit? There is another realm to which I will dispatch you, if you persist in your fantastical behavior." Narrowing her eyes, she peered at him. "And what have you done with your beard, meacock?"

"Madam," Philip² said desperately, "I'm not whoever you think I am, I assure you. My name is Philip Gardner. I'm a member of the faculty of—"

"Of course your name is Philip Gardner. And Philip Gardner it was at the time I wed you, ten years agone, when I was too young to know what I was doing."

"There's some mistake," Philip² persisted. "I'm not your husband —although I wish I were, I'm sure. My wife is much shorter than you and very much heavier."

He had thought this would please her, but he was mistaken.

"Mock me with my meagerness, would you!" she cried. "How can you say you're not my husband then, for he's taunted me with naught else for the past nine years!"

"I—I meant no harm," he said hastily. "In my—where I come from, it's considered attractive to be slender. My wife starves herself all the time, hoping to get a

figure like yours. But she'll never make it," he added, more to himself than to her.

"If you speak truth," she said, lowering her voice to more dulcet decibels, "and we are nowise akin, where would you say my own husband was then, eh, stranger from wherever you hail? For he's not here, you needs must agnize that yourself." She prodded him merrily in the ribs with her dripping ladle.

"H'm. I really don't know. Maybe you could tell me where I am now and then I could—" this was against all scientific principles, but he was quite at a loss—"make a guess."

HAD he traveled into the past somehow? But that was as illogical as anything else.

She stared at him. "Where you are now? Why, at our own dwelling at 379 Dulcamara Drive. Where else could you be, patch?"

Philip² blinked—379 Dulcamara Drive was his own address! So he was in his own living room. And yet he wasn't. How could that be?

He felt a little dizzy—from confusion, perhaps, or from the fumes that filled the room.

"May I sit down?" he asked mechanically, starting to do so in the nearest chair.

"Not there, measle!" she exclaimed. "Don't you mind the leg of that chair's of a mortal treacher-

ous nature?" She laughed. "Aye, I still mind me of the day the Chief Warlock—the corky antick—came to tea and the wretched thing mammocked itself beneath him." She was overcome with laughter at the memory. The cat miau'd with glee along with her.

Philip² smiled politely and sat in the chair she offered him. It was very hard. "Now I shall close my eyes," he told himself. "And when I open them, perhaps all this will be gone."

But it was still there. "It's no use," he sighed aloud, rubbed the chair arm. "I must be having a nervous breakdown . . . solid, technicolor hallucinations!"

The woman looked at him with concern. "To say sooth, knave, you don't look well. I'll compound you some phthisic in the twinkling of an eye that will oust the evil humors that beset you. First I'll empty the cauldron—" to his amazement, she poured the contents of the pot, which must have held at least four gallons, into a dram bottle—"and Perkin will clean the ladle like a good lad." The cat licked the spoon and smacked his lips ecstatically. "And then I'll set to work on a draught for you, lover. Green mold I'll need, aye, and the chaudron of a goat—"

Philip² shook his head. "No, thank you—please don't bother. I feel all right, really I do. Physically, that is. Psychologically, it's

evidently quite another matter."

"Your fashion of speaking is passing strange," she said suspiciously. Her eyes narrowed again. "I fancy I begin t'apprehend your game, my lad. Conveyance, eh?" Suddenly she was in a towering fury. "Mountebank! I could report you to the American College of Sorcerers! You'd have your license taken away, you coney-catcher! You'd not even stay a third-rank drumbling wizard!"

THEN she chuckled boarsely, her good humor restored as quickly as she had lost it. "So, you thought you'd fashion quaint plans to visit your 'other realm of existence,' forsooth, disappear for a moment, come back with your face unrough and your hair gilded to the yellow 'twas when first we were affled—and a sad day that was for me, too! Aye, and when you'd return from your counterfeit journey, you fancied I'd eel like a turtle and sigh, 'What a wonderful wizard y're, alder liefest!'

"Well, I'll not do it!" she exclaimed. "You'll not colt me with your fantasies. I know you for my mate, bearded or no!"

"Realm of existence . . .?" Philip² repeated slowly, frowning. Oh, no, it couldn't be that—was too fantastic a concept! He must be in the past! "I know this sounds awfully silly, but could you tell

me what year this is?"

"Why, 1953, of course." Her stare seemed to peel skin, tissue and bone away from his head, layer by layer, as if she sought to discover what lay inside. "And well y'know that, falsing wretch! I'm beginning to think you have gone clean out of your wits."

"So do I," he said, rubbing the chair arm again and taking a deep breath of the heavy air. "They'll probably send me to an asylum . . . unless this is one."

He looked about him critically. This wasn't his idea of an insane asylum—but some of them, he had heard, were very old-fashioned. Besides, if he were insane, things wouldn't appear to him as they actually were; they would be shaped by his own diseased imagining. Probably the woman was an involuntary creation of his subconscious. One never knows what horrors lie concealed in the depths of one's own mind. He wondered vaguely if this was the way he really thought of his wife—as a witch.

She came very close to him, so close that he could smell the sulphur and incense and musk that wreathed her person. "Fear not, rogue, you're all the husband I have—and I mean to keep you whiles you're restored to your good senses. D'you apprehend me?"

"Madam—"

"Call me Dorothea, dearest

chuck," she crooned, plucking a spider off his shoulder. "Or Dolly if you will, as you did when first we courted." She came closer to him. "Y'know, honey mouse—I don't know but that I fancy you better without a beard."

This—what was happening—he knew he couldn't have imagined.

II

THE room was similar in size and shape to the chamber he had just quit, but the furnishings, Philip¹ thought, were much less handsome—nay, they were not slightly at all. Their outlandish simplicity offended the eye and they lacked the richness of texture and magnificence of carved wood and parcel-gilding that made him delight in his own appointments.

Here were no opulent velvures and ornate brocades in deep and brilliant hues, Tyrian tapestries and golden (albeit somewhat tarnished) broideries laced with silver . . . but, instead, flat fustian stuffs in dull brown monotonies. The whole place was not pleasing to him. There was entirely too much light and air for the good of the health and the atmosphere was too thin to be virtuous.

Moreover, a chill lay over the chamber, and he suspected a draught. He was mortal sensitive to draughts. 'Twould be an ironical thing were an ague to carry

him off from this plaguey realm. After all, he hadn't planned to tarry here perdurable—just long enough to give Doll a sound fright. Although whether the fright would come from the loss of her spouse or from the knowledge that she was not absolutely omniscient, he could not be certain. He began to be a thought sorry he had cast the spell after all.

The room was tenanted, for there sat the lovesome wench he'd espied in his ball, perched on a chair as fussy as her own delicious person. She was perusing a slender tome with a flexible particolored cover. He hoped she was not another learned wench like Dorothea. A noise filled the room, but Philip¹ could descry no musicians nor even any arms behind which they might be lurking. Magic doubtless.

The dame glanced up with large hazel eyes. "Oh, there you are, Phil," she said. "I wish you wouldn't appear and disappear like that, honey. It makes me so nervous. Did you get the toaster fixed yet?"

"Sweet lady—" he began, but she gave him no chance to finish and be, having not yet devised what he would say, was content to let her speak. Her voice was low-pitched, monotonous as the room itself . . . but it fell graciously upon the ears of one accustomed to Doll's jangling tune.

"Oh, I knew you couldn't do it! I guess I'll have to take it to the repair shop again. 'What's the use of having a scientist for a husband,' I always say, 'if he can't do a thing around the house?'"

"Will't please you, peerless dame?"

"Go ahead, be rude to me! I'm used to it. I've lived with you for six years—I can take anything by now."

"Aye, verily," Philip¹ agreed, hoping his vagueness would pass muster, for in truth, although he brained the words this wench used, queerly formed though they were, their import clean eluded him.

SHE peered up at Philip¹. He realized that she was short-sighted as a moldwarp and could barely discern him. But he liked her limpid hazel orbs withal—and he much favored a wench such as this over one who saw all too well all too often.

"Why are you wearing your bathrobe in the middle of the day?" she demanded. "If there's anything sloppier than that, I don't know what it is. And you haven't shaved. Honestly, Philip, I don't know what's come over you."

Philip¹ seethed with righteous wrath. A churlish way to describe a brave beard that had taken considerable time and enchantment to gain its present mag-

nificence. And what had his robe to do with a bath? On such state occasions as he bathed, he always doffed his robe. But, he saw full well, both robe and beard would have to go, alas. Undoubtedly Philip² had appropriate garments which he himself could filch. Fortunately they were both of a size.

She looked at him expectantly, and he realized that it was his turn to say something. "Lady, I do assure you—" he began again.

"And why are you talking that way? Really, Philip, if you start trying to be funny, I don't think I can stand it." She began to blubber a little. "I m-missed my m-morning toast and you d-don't even care!"

The toaster must be a mighty important thing, for assuredly she'd not create a whoobub over some paltry pieces of scorched bread, which, moreover, it took no engine but a good roaring fire to prepare. And how was it that this well-favored creature made no use of her own spells to put it back into operation? Was she too orgulous to submit her necromancy to ordinary household use, or was it possible that she had no wizardry of her own? Push! Everyone knew—though he'd never have avowed it to Doll—that women were by far the more natural necromancers.

What the fair creature needed was soothing and he, as husband

temporary, was the fellow to sooth her. Accordingly, he coyed her auburn hair with hands that, he was much distressed to note of a sudden, were more like dirty claws. He must pay more heed to his appearance. When he wed Dorothea, he had been a brave figure of a man—but slaving over a hot cauldron had done its fell work. Nevertheless, he was a young man still. He could feel it in his liver.

"There, there, sweet mouse," he murmured. "No need for weeping, I do protest."

She looked up at him, onion-eyed. "Why, Phil, sugar, you never did that before. At least you haven't done it for a long time."

He coughed. Confound that draught. "Aye, you have the right of it, chuck. I have neglected you, spotted snake that I am! I was too immersed in my—er—conclusions." What was a scientist, anyway? "I shall try to make amends. This I do vow most solemnly."

She stared. "Why are you talking so peculiarly? What's come over you?"

HE repressed the reasonable rejoinder that 'twas she who had the odd fashion of parlance, minding that, after all, he was but a guest in her realm and in her house, ignorant though she might be of the fact.

"I have been poring over some

curious tomes of alien vintage," he offered, feeling this to be an adroit apologia. "Mayhap they have twisted my tongue . . . but by your leave, sweet lady—" he hastily diverted the subject—"might I address myself to the engine you call the toaster? I am not without some doctrine of my own."

She looked puzzled.

"Will y'lead the way, fair one?"
What was the wench's name?

"Turn the radio-off first, honey," she said. "No use wasting electricity."

"The—radio?" He followed the direction of her gaze, saw it rested upon a species of light-colored wooden coffer from which a doleful dump issued forth. Could there be a group of minikin players inside? Fantastical—it must be some kind of engine. He gingerly touched one of the bosses that whelked from the device. Forthwith a lively air was added to the melancholy strain, creating a mortal jangle.

She clapped hands to her shelly ears. "Phil-ip!" she cried. "You've turned on the phonograph! I knew it—you've been at the Scotch again, and after all your promises! 'Dora,' you said, eighteen times if you said it once, 'I swear to you that I'll never touch a drop again' . . . Do you want to make a spectacle of yourself in class again, the way you did last week?"

"Aye . . . That is, nay," Philip replied, pleased to have learned her

name at last, but more captivated by the musical box. The top of the gimmer opened as if 'twere a lid. Inside, a disk whirled round and round, and from this the second noise had apparently come. Now a voice joined the cacophony, singing some merry air.

Dora reached over his shoulder and twisted one protuberance after another. With a click, the melancholy tune and the gay one ended successively.

"I don't know how you can fix a toaster when you're too drunk to turn off the radio, but you might as well have a shot at it. If the repair shop fixes it, we'll have to pay plenty . . . and we're practically broke."

Philip¹ shuddered. Was one broken on the wheel here for debt? He felt nervously within his robe to make sure he had not lost his supply of ingredients for the return spell, so he could flee if conditions became too perilous. They were there, right enough, in the small velvet bag suspended from his neck. But what if the trip had altered them in some wise, so that they would not act correctly? He could not tell without essaying them and, if he essayed, he would leave this realm, which he did not plan to do yet.

"Dame Fortune be kind to me," he breathed as he followed the Lady Dora toward a door on 't other side of the room. It had

been an age, he mused, as he admired her tidy, silk-gowned curves bouncing before him, sith he'd incapped any but a bag of bones.

At that moment, his conscience took it upon its meddling self to smite him. For had he not abandoned Philip², who was well-nigh his brother—indeed more than a brother, being his own very self—to that same bag of bones? Oh, well . . . Doll'd be more of a lesson to him than a book. But a scientist—that sounded as if he might be a learned wight. And a man of learning might be able to find his way back to his own realm of existence. Philip¹ had never mused over such a potentiality—want of forethought had always been his bane. Should the other return, especially at an inopportune occasion, there would be a rare gallimaufry!

DORA led Philip¹ into a species of laboratory, where she indicated a metal device that needs must be the toaster. Marvelous complicated, it appeared, but he could not account himself sorcerer and be baffled by any engine. There was bread inside. If all she listed was to burn it, why could she not do so over the fire? Then he looked about him and saw there was no fire.

"This realm must ha' branched off a long time agone, perdy," he mused, "for 'tis apparent that

it holds no heritage from Prometheus."

"As I understand the matter," he quoth aloud, donning his professional mien, "this gimmer is not operating in the manner for which 'twas fashioned."

Dora giggled agreeably. "Oh, Phil, you are a scream—even if you are drunk. Do you think you can fix it?"

She looked up at him hopefully. Her face was full and fair as the moon's. She was a sweet lady, and he recked not whether her lips were rubious from art or from nature. There'd be no harm in bussing his own german's wife, he thought, especially since the churl—according to his lady's plaints—had been somewhat sparing of caresses.

"You don't have to fix the toaster this very minute," she said breathlessly as she emerged flushed and a trifle disordered from his ardent embrace. "Funny," she added, "I don't smell any liquor on your breath."

"Nay, I must atone for my shrewish behavior of the morn." Tucking up his sleeves, he waved his hands over the toaster in the set movements. "Whatever was dark/Now shall be light/Whatever was wrong/Now shall be right."

"But I like dark toast," she protested.

Philip² frowned. "I must have

absolute silence during my spell," he ordered. "Genie, warlock, witch, or mage,/Thaumaturge, savant or sage,/Necromancer, wizard, gnome,/ Whatever spirit plagues this home,/Demon, kobold, imp or ghost or/Whoe'er you be, unspell this toaster."

He snapped his fingers. "Be operant once again."

The filaments in the toaster glowed a rosy red. Both pieces of bread shot to the ceiling and rebounded, an even golden-brown on both sides.

"Oh, Philip!" Dora sighed, clinging to him. "You're wonderful!"

Her person was warm and yielding in his arms. While her head was pressed against his bosom, he took the occasion to magick away his beard. 'Twas a woeful thing to have to do, but a small price to pay for the favor of so lovesome a damsel as this. No need to return to his own realm for another few days . . . or weeks . . . or mayhap even ever. After all, Dorothea had little need for him—she had her career.

He pulled aside a flap of his robe so he could get a glimpse of his own world in the crystal. Pity he could only see but not hear. What was that? Doll embracing the fellow? Could she really have been deceived into fancying such a frampoid losel to be her own Philip? Well, 'twas his own craft

that had bleared her eyes.

Had she any real perceptivity, she'd have known by now—but then hadn't he always said she was more sorceress than woman? Now this tender-hefted lady in his arms—she was all woman!

Dora looked up at him with worshipful eyes. "Darling, I'm sure nobody could have fixed the toaster as well as you did. Why, it works without even being plugged in!"

"**S**IP this, sweet lad," Dorothea said tenderly, offering Philip² a cup of reeking liquid. "Let's have no defiance—it'll bring the roses back to your cheeks. Of a truth, I've never seen you so pale! I wonder if 'tis the loss of your beard—" she touched his cheek with a cold hand—"for they say that the cutting off of a man's hair saps his mortal strength, as with Samson."

"Samson," Philip² repeated. Here was something he could understand. "Then you have the Bible?"

She stared at him. "Of a certainty we have the Bible. What d'ye take us for—savages? In truth, Philip, I begin to think y're indeed sore diffused. Drink the electuary, man. 'Twill relieve you of your ecstasy and warm the cockles of your being."

Philip² drained the cup at a gulp. It wasn't bad at all—it was

sweet and definitely contained alcohol.

"That's my good peat," she said approvingly. "I'd be loath t'have it go to waste, for it's a mighty clever concoction. Albertus and Agrippa themselves could not surpass me in contrivance. And a pretty penny th'elixir cost me, too, for toad's entrails come prodigious high these days. But there's naught too good for you, honey mouse."

Philip² gulped. He felt he should be sick, but strangely enough he seemed to feel stronger, more invigorated. And he wasn't shaking any longer. Odd how effective the power of suggestion could be.

The cat rubbed against him and he bent over to stroke it. It felt just like an ordinary cat. It purred just like an ordinary cat. Even an ordinary cat, he figured, could be trained to clean dishes. He must try it on a kitten when he got back to . . .

He throttled the thought. He didn't know where he was or how he could return.

Dorothea stretched and her black shadow on the wall stretched along with her. "Well, to work now . . . I spent all of yesterday and this morn soothing your evil humors. But woman's work is never done."

Crossing the room to a massive carved wardrobe surmounted by a grinning skull that lent—Philip²

thought—a cheerful note to the room, she took out a long black cloak of some coarse material, which she wound about herself like a cocoon. Philip³ watched with disapproval. Her clothes were unbecoming; he must get her to wear brighter colors and dresses that were made to fit her instead of a sack of flour. Put a little makeup on her face, fix her hair, dress her right and she'd ornament any magazine cover with distinction.

"I needs must quit you for the nonce, dearest chuck," Dorothea said, fastening the clasp of her cape. "The Lady Alison has need of a cunningly wrought love potion, such as only I have the art to make, for the men are marvelous afeared of the wench, despite her beauty . . . and she's too fine, forsooth, to come fetch it herself, despite the fact that I'm of higher estate than she." She looked at Philip². "And now that I mind me of it," she added, "'tis as well that the luxurious giglet does not come herself."

"Can't you insist that she come?" Philip² asked.

"Now, sparrow, wouldst have me lose my license? Y'know that were I to refuse t'attend the bedside of a patient, I'd be violating the Merlinian Oath. What's amiss with your wits, rogue? For you too are bound by the oath, despite your inferior degree. Many's the time have I wondered why I wed





CALL ME WIZARD

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a fellow practitioner of the mystical art, for 'tis better when a pair's interests are disparate, so that they do not clash—else the lower's always mortal jealous of the higher."

She sighed, then smiled at him. Her smile was very attractive. "Now mind the wares, sweet spouse."

She kissed him good-by—Philip¹ did not find the sensation at all unpleasant—and was gone. So confused was he that it took him a little while to realize she hadn't opened a door and walked out.

She had simply disappeared. Curiouser and curioser. He wondered what laws governed this strange world to which he had been conveyed.

He went to the door and rattled its knob. It wouldn't open—yet he knew instinctively that no lock held it shut. And the windows were also tightly shuttered with the same—he could not bring himself to call it spell—device.

Whatever it was he was trapped.

III

"YOU'D better get dressed, Phil," Dora yawned. "You've got to go to class."

"Class?" Philip¹ repeated, sitting up reluctantly. "Am I a scholar, then?"

Certes, but they stayed students to a ripe old age on this plane.

Could it be that the other Philip was his junior? But nay, sith they were the same man, logic must have them the same age—two and thirty. Well for him that learning was favored in this realm, for Philip¹ was himself a most authentic fellow.

"Of course, honey," Dora said gently, pushing him off the bed. "You're a scholar and a gentleman. Now hurry. Your students will be waiting."

"Oh, I apprehend you now! I am a pedant—a schoolmaster!"

"Philip," she murmured sweetly, patting his cheek, "we'll joke another time. My, how smooth your face is. Did you get an electric razor?"

"Er—aye."

"Oh, do stop talking that way," she said gaily. "And hurry up and get dressed. If you keep on being late, Professor Brunschweiger will never renew your contract."

He pulled open the cupboard door and discovered strange and rare attire. Sith the more gorgeous raiment was much too small for him, he was forced to the sorry conclusion that the sober garments—better suited to a monk or a priest than a lusty young wizard—were the other Philip's.

A pedantic and garbed in such wise! he thought. *I'll warrant me he's a philosopher.* And his heart lightened, for he was not unskilled in divers philosophies and could

make shift to instruct the young in their precepts.

Garbing himself in those garments least displeasing to the eye, he anointed himself from a pouncet box he found upon a chest of drawers and approached the bed to buss his spouse—or Philip²'s.

Dora sat up with a gasp of dismay. "Philip, enough is enough! You know very well you can't teach your physics class in a purple sport shirt and green slacks. And that's my best hat you have on, you idiot! I'm not sure whether you're trying to be funny or what!" She sniffed. "Is that *my perfume* you're wearing?"

Perdy, he had not thought a lady who was so generous of her favors to be so frugal of her possessions.

"I—I am sorry, my love," he faltered. "I fancied it to be my own."

"That's not funny! And I don't care if it *is* the modern fashion for men to wear cologne. I won't have you do it!"

"Yes, sweet mouse," he said meekly. He hoped she was not going to turn out a shrew after all.

"I let you pick out the furniture," she said. "You told me it was the latest thing and—"

"Wasn't *I* who sorted those paltry sticks of wood? I must have had a fit of the junes. We'll make a roaring blaze of 'em on the morrow and procure something more suitable to our quality."

"Darling!" she said in delight. "I've hated them for years."

...so I teach physics, he mused as he arrayed himself in a sober suit of dark serge. Have I left my own realm usurp the position of one of my arch-enemies, a physician? Well, he'd show his young charges by his shrewd tutelage of what little avail was medicine 'gainst adroit necromancy.

Nevertheless, a leech needs must know somewhat of sorcery. The fear again attacked him that the other Philip might have sufficient art to transport himself back to his own realm—although in such case the wonder was that he had not appeared already. Moreover, if Philip² had not the skill, Dorothea might well aid him. Together they might fathom out the spell. Perhaps even now they were in the act of contriving it.

WHILE Dora, sweet and gentle lady that she was, prepared their morning repast, he consulted his crystal ball. She had an engine, he noted, for laying the crockery. It occupied considerably more space than did Perkin, but 'twas also, he fancied, less likely to claw one about the ankles when wrathful.

But what was this he espied in the crystal? Dorothea—feeding the other Philip a potion—a *love potion* by the look of it! This passed all comprehension. He'd go right

straight back and demand . . .

"But softly now," he addressed himself. "Well she knows I'd be a-spying on her in the glass. She does this solely out of despite—for who could fancy yon lily-livered hilding. She thinks that when I view the pretty scene, I'll come hastening back to her. Well, I'll trick her!"

And that proved one thing, he thought cheerfully, as he partook of various odd but uncommonly palatable dainties—Dorothea knew not the spell, else she'd not resort to such devious means to retrieve her errant fere. So he was safe, for the nonce at least, from interruption by either Philip² or Dorothea at a—he clapped Dora tenderly as she aided him into his surcoat—parlous awkward time.

Sith he was not familiar with this new locale, he could not transport himself via the magical art to the university whither—he had found out from divers tricksy questions—he was bound. However, the driver of a gaudy-hued cart, powered by some mystic formula, gladly agreed to convey him to that place. Though Philip¹ had no gold upon him—Dorothea had always made certain of that—he found the knave to be much gratified by the gift of one of the bits of paper which he found in a leather case within his undercoat.

"Doubtless it has a very powerful spell writ upon it," Philip¹ re-

flected, "and 'tis mortal interesting to note the difference in the magical power of numbers from plane to plane of existence. For in my own world 'tis the odd numbers, particularly three, seven and nine, that are strongest—whereas, judging from th' inscription upon the charm I gave you good fellow, 'tis the figure ten that is of mystic power here."

Philip¹ stared up at the Science Building. A goodly tower, but how would be find the apartment in which he was scheduled to begin his pedagogical duties amongst the foison with which this structure must be filled?

There was a giggle behind him. "Hello, Dr. Gardner," said a light voice.

He turned to find two maidens regarding him with worshipful expressions. Both bore weighty tomes and their attire, he noted with approval, was so fashioned as to give full emphasis to their budding charms.

"Aren't you coming up to class?" asked the other maiden, giggling at her own boldness. "You're a little late, sir."

"Of a truth, I have not been well," Philip¹ replied. "I was seized by a species of rapture yest'reen, which well-nigh caused me to forgo today's instruction."

"Oh, that would have been terrible!" said the first damsel earnestly. "I come to class only to

hear you." And she blushed.

"You still sound a little funny, Dr. Gardner," observed the second. "Probably something wrong with the nerve reflexes controlling your speech centers. We learned all about things like that in psychology. Here, lean on me and I'll help you up to class."

"No, lean on *me!*" quoth the first jealously.

"Perhaps," Philip¹ murmured, "if I could but avail myself of support from both, I would tax neither excessively."

THEIR arms were soft and round and warm, and both maidens smelled sweetly of some pleasing fragrance. He leaned a trifle more heavily upon them. They were sturdy lasses, well able to endure his weight.

And thus, supported by a fair damsel on either side, Philip¹ made an impressive entrance into Philip²'s classroom.

The apartment was recognizably a laboratory, though of a disagreeably aseptic assemblance. There should be corpses lying about for him to mammock, were he a leech—possibly, so point-devise was the chamber's arrangement, they were stored in the numerous cabinets set along the walls 'neath crystal-fronted cases. He himself liked everything to be laid out in plain sight, ready to hand. Should he decide to tarry

in this quaint but appealing world, he would conform Philip²'s appointments to his own convenience and inclinations.

A goodly group of youths aspersed with a few maidens were seated before a low dais upon which stood a table. They did not rise as he entered and was tenderly led by the two damsels to a chair behind the table.

"Looks him!" remarked a clear male voice.

"Dr. Gardner isn't feeling well," one maiden explained. "You mustn't upset him."

"Lay off, goon," agreed the other, setting a large tome before Philip¹. "Here's your textbook, Dr. Gardner."

Philip¹ passed his hand over his eyes. Surely he should have reckoned beforehand on the other Philip's having some manner of occupation. "I fear me I am something mazed," he murmured. "Prithee, gracious damsel, could you show me at what point the reading for today commences?"

There was a smothered guffaw from the male members of the class and whispering which he could not make out, but which his two fair mentors apparently could.

"He is not drunk!" One maiden stamped her foot. "He's sick. He shouldn't be teaching at all really, only he insisted on coming. There's something wrong with his speech centers—that's why he talks oddly."

"He works too hard," the other said in sepulchral tones. "He knocks himself out teaching you ungrateful ignoramus . . . Here's the place, Dr. Gardner. We were going to start in on gravity, remember?"

"You know what gravity is, Dr. Gardner?" one of the boys said in a falsetto voice. "Whatever is dropped must fall down . . . boom!"

Philip¹ jumped despite himself, and all the youths laughed right heartily.

He was glad he could so facilely confound the forward knave. "Sirrah, that is false! Whate'er is dropped may fall down. On t'other hand, it may rise."

He cleared his throat and spoke more resonantly now that he was assured of his ground. Fortunate that all that was required here was a simple spell. Were it some complicated formula that needed, say, a mandrake root, he'd not know where to get it in this humorous world—for the store he had concealed in the phylactery suspended from his neck was already mingled in the receipt for changing existences.

"Observe I lift this tome." He picked up the physics book. "I let it fall from my hand. It drops."

The volume thumped to the floor. The class laughed—the youths again with more glee than the maidens.

"Now—" he turned to the two damsels who had guided him thither and who still hovered anxiously about him—"could I trouble you for some salt?"

And then he had a moment of doubt: did they have salt in this realm? Their hesitation did nothing to abet his faltering confidence.

"S-salt?" quavered one maiden. "But you don't use salt in physics."

"The chemistry lab will have some!" the other said sharply. "It's marked NaCl. Run next door and fetch some."

PHILIP¹ smiled weakly at the students. Supposing his spell didn't work here? He'd be the laughing stock of these princoses. And if this spell did not operate, then neither would the concoction he wore in the bag around his neck. He would be lodged eternally in this lawless existence! Dora was a charitable wench, but he must not forget, Dorothea had royal blood—though there were thirteen between her and the throne.

The damsel was gone but for the space of a minute, yet it seemed like a mortal long stretch to him. She was back anon with a whitish powder. He touched the tip of his tongue to it warily. 'Twas salt, right enough.

"Now, fair maid—" he turned to t'other—"might I have a hair from your head? 'Tis only," he

explained to the sulky salt-fetcher, "that I need a hair black as night and strong as silk."

Placing the hair and a pinch of salt atop the book, he intoned, "Jet black hair will band/Salt as white as snow./To me, at my command,/Go where you must go." He made the proper sign.

"I take it back," a male voice said distinctly. "He's not drunk—he's crazy."

"And now," Phillip¹ stated, casting a baleful eye at the rudesby, "again I let the book drop from my hand. But this time it does not fall."

And, indeed, the book rested motionless in the air without so much as a quiver. Phillip¹ beamed. His magic worked excellently well in this realm. There was naught to fear.

A mortal hush fell over the classroom as he prepared to speak again.

"And, sith I so list, the book will rise to the ceiling—" the tome obeyed— "or, at my command, settle gently upon the floor sans sound."

The book floated gently to the floor, paused a moment, then lay down obediently. Every member of the class gazed at Phillip¹ with respect, awe, admiration and such-like sentiments appropriate to his quality.

"And the lesson we are to derive from this," he added gently,

"is—take naught for granted, but keep a mind receptive of all things."

Long have I known, he told himself, that I had some inclination as a pedant.

One of the youths lifted his arm, obviously to attract the master's attention.

"What would you, good juvenile?" Phillip¹ asked graciously.

"Could you—would you show us how you did—did that with the book?"

"Ay, marry, that will I with right glad heart!" To call himself teacher, he needs must teach. "If there but were some means whereby I might inscribe the proper characters of the spell for all to view . . . Ah!" He took up a stick of some pale substance that rubbed off upon his fingers. "Haply I might use this white stuff to letter upon you black panel?"

From the countenances of his students, he discovered he had surmised aright. 'Twas cleverness of apprehension as well as doctrine that made th'adroit necromancer.

"Be't so then. I shall write the characters upon this black—er—board, pronouncing them as I do so. And you shall repeat them aloud after me."

There was the clearing of a powerful throat from the back of the room. Previously Phillip¹ had noted out the corner of an eye

that a portly wight of advanced years had entered the room, but he had paid th' intruder scant mind, being too much occupied in confounding his forward charges.

Now the stranger spoke and his voice was resonant with authority. "Just a minute, Dr. Gardner! Would you step into my office?"

The tone was the same that Dorothea employed when Philip¹ had boded a brew (which, of course, happened only seldom—when). Apparently he had done something amiss. Well, there was naught to fear—did he find himself in aught that seemed dangerous, he had but to cast his spell and return to his own realm.

His fingers felt reassuringly in his bosom for the phylactery containing the ingredients and found—nothing. The little velvet bag was gone! Now he was imperiled indeed!

IV

PHILIP² felt afraid. Obviously Dorothea had not meant to trap him in the room—she had simply assumed that he would be able to leave the same way she had. As the Philip she thought he was probably could. But—was there any other way out? Were there streets outside? There must be—otherwise how could the house have an address? That was logical. Come to think of it, where did

he want to go? If he did get out of the house, he might lose himself so well that even Dorothea's arts—now look at him, he was beginning to take her magic powers seriously! But she had disappeared. He had seen her with his own eyes. Or, rather, he hadn't seen her . . . Maybe she had hypnotized him. Hypnosis was scientific. You could explain it logically.

Anyhow, he might get so lost even Dorothea wouldn't be able to find him. And so he might lose any chance of ever returning to his own existence, for here at Dulcamara Drive was his only connection with his former world. . .

Perkin, who had been rubbing ardently against his legs, now miau'd importunately.

And then, "What ails you, varlet?" piped a voice behind Philip². "Can y'not see y've have a client awaiting you?"

Philip² whirled. A freckle-faced boy of eight or ten was regarding him with pale blue eyes. The child's clothes were strange—much more colorful and ornate than a boy would be caught dead wearing in Philip²'s own world—but they were obviously costly.

"I have need of your arts, sorcerer," he said with a lofty air. "I will pay y'well for your contrivance and your discretion."

"Do you want a love potion, maybe?" Philip² couldn't help asking.

"Mock me not, wizard. Or, if you mock me, mock not my gold!"

The boy smugly waved a small velvet bag. The jingling could easily be that of gold. Philip² had not heard enough gold jingle in his life to be sure.

Spoiled child of the rich! he thought resentfully. He'd better do what he could to help the brat, however, for he needed Dorothea's assistance in getting back to his own world . . . although there was really no particular hurry. But he'd certainly not ingratiate himself with her by antagonizing the customers.

Pity he couldn't ask the boy how he had got into the room. But that would betray himself . . . and Dorothea. He wouldn't want to betray her. Finest woman he had ever known. And he'd have to leave her . . .

"What do you want, sonny?" he asked, clearing his throat of emotion. "Maybe I can help you."

"Of a sooth, sirrah, you speak fantastically," replied the child. "I'd beard tell that the sorceress's spouse was something lacking in wit, but I had not thought it so extensive a deficiency."

"If there's one thing I dislike," Philip² muttered, "it's a precocious child."

THEN he realized that the little boy was no more precocious than a French child who speaks

French; he was merely run-of-the-mill obnoxious.

"I like you not either," the child stated. "Moreover, for so delicate a matter as I have in mind, I fear you would not have sufficient artifice. Let me affront the sorceress herself, if you please," he commanded imperiously.

"Just what did you want done?" Philip² asked, annoyed. What, after all, could Dorothea do with her alleged sorcery that he could not surpass with his science? "Affronting me is quite enough for you, my boy."

"Well . . ." the child began hesitantly. "I should like some quaint gimmer, some clever and fantastical contrivance, that upon th'application of the proper spell would burst incontinently with a heart-warming clamor. 'Tis rather tedious at the pa—at my abode and I fain would inject some vivacity into the atmosphere. Meseems 'twould be a right merry jape to see my worthy father foot it yarely in the air of a sudden like afeat—though portly—gazelle."

Philip² sighed with relief. "What you want is a firecracker. I'm sure I can make you one. Wonder where Dorothea keeps her gunpowder. She must have some—I'm sure no home on this plane of existence is without it."

He peered up into the shadows over the mantelpiece, where three canisters stood in a row . . . but

they were clearly marked *Mercury*, *Sulphur*, *Salt*. No gunpowder.

"Or, given the ingredients," he went on, opening one of the cabinets in the wall and looking dubiously into its cluttered interior, "I think I could make the gunpowder. After all, I am a scientist."

The boy made a derisive noise, which Philip² pretended to ignore. "I'll need potassium nitrate to start with," he went on, prodding a tangled mass of roots with a gingerly finger, "or, as you'd probably call it, saltpeter . . . Ouch!"

Something inside the cupboard had bitten his finger sharply. He slammed the door shut and leaned against it, although, now that he had time to consider the brief glimpse he'd had of his assailant, he fancied it was only a bat. He must speak to Dorothea about tidying up the place. There was such a thing as a room looking too lived-in.

Miraculously, he found the compound he sought on trial of a musty cobwebbed jar that lurked at the back of the shelves. There was sulphur in ample quantities at hand and he managed to procure some charcoal from the fireplace. The boy eyed him skeptically as he mixed the explosive, taking time out now and again to nurse his bitten finger.

"Tseems an oddly roundabout way to produce the jape I crave," the youngster said as Philip²

poured his mixture into an improvised cylinder of stiff paper and set about contriving a fuse. "Methinks it might prove more perilous than I fancy."

"Don't worry—it will do the trick," said Philip². He made a second smaller firecracker with the remainder of his mixture, noted that Perkin sat crouched, with his ears back, beneath a bench in the far corner. The big cat looked as if it wished it could get through the wall.

"There," said Philip² with pardonable pride. "We'll test the smaller cracker just to make sure." He put it on the hearth, plucked a brand from the fire and lighted the brief fuse.

THREE was a brief flare of bright light as the powder caught — then a sharp sucking sound and the firecracker vanished abruptly and without visible cause — or visible remains. Philip² blinked and uttered a very ancient Anglo-Saxon word.

"'Tis my belief," said the boy suspiciously, "that you're an imposter. For, weak in the mazard though he might be, Dorothea's spouse would ken where the stores were kept, less he were clean bestraught."

"Nonsense!" Philip² snapped, hastily righting a retort which he had knocked over, before the snake inside could escape. It was

annoying that the child should be so much more perceptive than his own wife—than the other Philip's own wife, rather. Philip² unstoppered a bottle and smelled it. Could it really be wine?

He saw the boy regarding him and hastily replaced the cork. "Nonsense!" he repeated. "It's just that she keeps changing everything around so, I can't find a . . . Dolly!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Am I glad to see you!"

For the sorceress had just reappeared in the room. "I was half-way to Lady Alison's," she explained breathlessly, brushing back her ruddy locks, "when I minded me that you were something addled—something informal I mean—Philip."

"Addled is the proper term," commented the child. "I wot well who has the wit in this household."

"—and might, being a thought humorous, bodge the trade," she continued, ignoring him. "I myself must have had a touch of the lunes to leave you without fore-warning. Therefore, I say to you now—would y'not essay any contrivance today, but merely content yourself with inscribing all orders upon this tablet, and I'll fulfill 'em from the scrippage. You can write, can't you?"

"Of course I can! And what's more, I could fill the orders, too, if I knew where everything was kept. All this kid needs is a fire-

cracker. Now if I had some gunpowder, I could—"

"Gunpowder!" she cried. "You're mazed, Philip. Gunpowder in the Twentieth Century! There've been no guns extant since the Eighteenth, for a spell ne'er fails to find its mark, while guns are monstrous uncertain engines. Is't an explosion you want, princox?" she addressed the child. "I ha' the very thing."

Reaching into a cabinet, she pulled out a paper packet. Nothing bit her, Philip² observed recently. She must have had the contents of her cupboards well trained.

"When y'wish to create a rare hurley," she said to the boy, "but asperse the powder in the air while reciting the words charactered upon the parchment. The result will exceed your most extensive aspirations."

"And the price?" the boy asked suspiciously. "I warn you, sorceress, maugre my youth, I'm not one to be galled."

"Three ducats," replied Dorothea. "A small price for so large an explosion."

"It seems just," the child admitted, counting three pieces of gold into her palm. "But I'll be back should it fail in its effect!"

"Oh, you'll not be back, skipper!" Dorothea told him. "I'll warrant you that!"

The boy disappeared.

PERKIN came and rubbed against Philip²'s legs. Dorothea, regarding the animal affectionately, threw it a morsel of mummy. She seemed pleased that it liked Philip². Philip² wondered whether Philip¹ had used the cat brutally. If so, he would make up for it. Reaching down, he tickled Perkin's ear. Perkin purred. Dorothea looked at both fondly.

"By the way," Philip² asked, straightening, "what was in the package you gave the kid?"

"Oh, a trick, naught more," Dorothea replied carelessly, dragging a snaggle-toothed gold comb through her tangled hair, with small effect. "Merely a quaint contrivance for cleaving th'atom."

"Cleaving—splitting the atom!" Philip² yelled. "That's impossible. It would blow him up and his house and his family and—and . . ."

"And all else for miles about," Dorothea agreed cheerfully. "If his family is caught with its spells down. But he dwells a goodly distance from here, for I recognized the lad, cunningly though the little estridge thought he'd altered himself. Did he think he could biear my eyes?" She snorted. "'Tis the little crown prince and we stand sore in need of a new regime if his parents wax careless."

"But how does it work?" Philip² demanded. After all, an abstract scientist should steer clear of politics—he was interested in the



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principles involved. "You can't split the atom without deuterium, uranium and so forth. A whole fission pile, as a matter of fact."

"What manner of spell is that?"

"It's not a *spell*! It's a—well, a factory, so to speak."

Dorothea smiled contemptuously. "Cleaving an atom needs no manufactory, sweet fool. All that's required is the proper enchantment."

"But—but you've got to have the proper equipment to split the atom," he protested. "It stands to reason."

"Prove it then," she suggested, logically enough, he was forced to admit.

"I haven't an Oak Ridge on me. My God, woman, it's a *huge* plant!"

"Make one then."

"But I can't—it takes a lot of time and money and skilled technicians . . ."

"The spell," she retorted, "costs but three ducats and takes but a moment. Even if your 'science' works, as mayhap it does, for I'm not parochial enough to think my system of magic th' only one extant—'tis only the best—it could not be as speedy and economical as my spell."

He did not ask her for a demonstration because, although he knew it *couldn't* be, he had a sinister suspicion that perhaps it *would*, and he didn't precisely care to be

caught in the middle of an atomic explosion.

"Why should it work?" he demanded.

"Why shouldn't it?" she replied practically.

"A spell can't work. Now take science. I perform an experiment, go through the same procedures and the results are always the same, providing I haven't made any error. For instance, at a certain altitude, if I heat water to a certain degree, it will always boil. You must know what I mean," he insisted. "You have a fire under your pot."

SHE grinned. "'Tis but for decorative effect, my innocent. Ha' you ne'er heard of a fire used solely for ornament?"

"Sure, but if it boils water, it's not just ornamental."

"Mark me well." She moved her hands in an intricate pattern. "Round about,/Low and high,/Flames go out;/Fire die."

The room was now absolutely dark except for the glow of two pairs of eyes—the green ones of the cat, the yellow ones of Dorothea.

"I forgot," her voice came hollow in the blackness, "you cannot see in the dark. Aroint thee, night;/Away with gloom!/Let truth's own light illumine this room."

And the chamber was filled with a strange blue radiance which, al-

though it illuminated more than the firelight had—perhaps because it illuminated more—gave a particularly horrid aspect to the room.

Now he saw the steel-strong spiderwebs that stretched from beam to beam, their round-bodied occupants watching him impersonally with flat yellow eyes like Dorothea's. He saw that the raven perched over the doorway was not stuffed. He saw clearly the subjects of the smoke-dimmed tapestries and hastily looked away.

"You'll allow the firelight is more friendly-seeming," Dorothea smiled. There was not much attractive about her smile now. Under the blue, almost fluorescent light, her skin took on a pallid purplish tinge and her elf-locks seemed to curl into writhing snakes with tiny jewel-eyes that stared at him. "Look into the cauldron, knave. See, 'tis empty. Now I fill it with water."

And the pot, whose black iron bottom he had just seen bare and dry was filled to the brim with clear liquid."

Philip²'s teeth were chattering, but he still strove for reason and logic. "H-how do I know it's water?"

She frowned, and he involuntarily retreated a step. "Take my word for it, man! Moreover, any liquid—whatever it be—needs heat to boil, does it not?"

He nodded.

She pointed a long finger at the iron vessel. "Double, double, no
toil, no trouble,/No fire . . . to
make my cauldron bubble."

The water—liquid or whatever it was — definitely was boiling, and boiling violently. And the pot hung over cold ashes and emptiness. There was no fire.

Dorothea's voice sounded very remote in his ears. "Shall I restore the flames, sweet chuck? Meseems they are more cozy than this light."

Again he nodded without speaking. He was more frightened than he had been even when he first found himself in this place. And he was cold inside and thought maybe he was going to be sick.

HOW could there be such a place as this, where everything was contrary to the principles on which his whole life was based? He knew it couldn't exist—that it was mere fancy and yet . . . here he was. And he wasn't mad—madness would have been a relief—he was clearly, horribly sane. Even if he could return to his own plane of existence now, the only way he could do it would be by employing the methods of this world: by using a spell.

And what good would that be? It would forever haunt him. As a scientist, he could not deny to himself that this place would continue to exist and mock everything he stood for. Knowing that, he

could no longer be content with the science of his own world. Yet there was no place for him in this one. Wherever he went now, he was lost.

There was only one thing he could do—adapt the workably scientific principles of his native plane to the necromantic laws which appeared to prevail in this one. Already he was beginning to understand that his firecracker had failed to work because of a universal centuries-old spell banning the use of gunpowder.

And therein lay the key, Philip² decided. On his original plane, the powers of the mind in general were ineffective against the powers of the machine. On this strange world in which he found himself, the reverse seemed to apply.

Why? What lay beneath this about-face of so-called natural laws? And what were its applications? Philip² felt a challenge that was worthy of his talent, perhaps even beyond it. But surely here was the perfect field assignment for a hitherto humdrum man of science. Here was a whole new world to explore, to study, to test, to understand.

And here was Dorothea, with her weird but very definite charm . . . what's more, with what began to look like a definite attraction to himself.

He looked at the large and useless firecracker and then closed his

eyes, hearing Dorothea's eerie voice chant, "Black is white./Left is right./Lower will be higher./Out true light./Go, clear sight./Flare up, magic fire."

He heard the crackling of flames.

"Open your eyes, sweet. The fire burns again. All is well—there's naught to fear."

He felt warmth on his face and when he ventured to open his eyes, the blue light was gone, the fire burned under the cauldron and Dorothea was merely a fashionably thin red-haired woman . . . no longer a snaky-haired enchantress.

She smiled at him and he knew whatever was or was not, he could never return to his own world.

It wasn't until after she had gone that he remembered she had asked him whether he could write. No matter how little a wife may know her own husband, she'd know whether he could write or not. Of course! She wouldn't have explained the difference between the two planes to her *husband*. She knew who Philip³ was, where he had come from, probably where he was going. She knew everything. What a devil of a woman to be in love with!

He pulled the cork out of the bottle whose contents had smelled like wine and recklessly drank whatever the fluid was. Nothing that happened to him from then on mattered.

PHILIP² absent-mindedly entered the front door and it opened afore hebethought himself that 'twould have been more seemly to use the key with which Dora had provided him. Previously it had seemed a thought strange to him that doors and windows were in ordinary use here. Now he knew the reason—there was so little magic in this world that it must be conserved for deeds of import.

How even a third-rank wizard (for he must admit that he was held in insufficient esteem on his own plane) could have festinately mastered this realm! Or so it seemed. But such was not to be the case! He had bodge this existence, as he had bodge his former one.

Mayhap Dorothea was right—he was a sad drumbler and a fool's fool in any realm. And now he was trapped indeed, having performed something so horrendous here that he could not quite brain its significance . . . and yet unable to return to his own, having been witness enough to lose the phylactery somewhere.

Perhaps, and he'd been hopeful for a moment, the same ingredients could be assembled in this existence—but no, even were it possible, 'twould take too long. "Oh, Dolly, Dolly!" he groaned inwardly. "If y'do not haste to fetch me, I'm

like to perish most miserably."

But he had glimpsed her in his crystal ball a-kissing and a-hugging of the other Philip, whom he had so cunningly disguised with his magical arts that she *must* think him her own spouse—'twas the only reasonable explanation. But it gave him small comfort to think that he was like to die for being a good wizard rather than for being a bad one.

"Od's pittikins!" he moaned. "They'll stretch me on the rack or belike break me on the wheel—neither of which strikes me as an agreeable end to all my charms."

At the sound of his cough, for he had indeed taken a bisson rheum in this benighted clime, the homely clattering of dishes ceased and Dora pattered out on delightful stilt heels.

"What's the matter, sweetie pie?" she asked, turning up her painted plum-cheeked face to be bussed. It would break his heart to part from her, though less if the parting were to result from enchantment rather than death. "Did something go wrong?"

"Aye, there has been something of a coil, dearest chuck," he said wearily, hurling his headgear upon a table. "It appears that th'orgulous yarlets who seem to hold the power of the high, the low and the middle justice over me do not fancy my pedagogic method."

"But why?" Her purblind eyes stared. "You're teaching the kids just the same way you always did, aren't you, lambchop?" She tightened her arms about him. "Aren't you?"

HE could not unfold the whole matter to the wench without discovering to her that he was not her true husband. Had he any hope of an incontinent return to his own realm, the truth needs must out forthwith, however. And what a pretty garboil Philip² would have found upon his return—a just merit for having treated his lovesome wife so scurvily. But the bag was lost and with it hope was lost as well.

"I ha' varied my methods, my love," he said cautiously. "I've developed a new doctrine which effects the same results as the logger-headed procedures which the flap-eared measles term as 'scientific method.' 'Scientific method,' pusbl Certes, but y'have a ponderous and ineffectual system of magical arts here under the name of 'science.' "

She stared at him blankly. He dragged himself wearily into the principal chamber and threw himself upon the couch.

"Marry," he sighed, "I'm fatigute."

Dora unfastened the moist apron that was the sweet badge of her subservience and sat on the

arm of the couch, stroking his hair. Her hazel eyes were troubled.

"But what happened, Phil?" she asked. "Did they—did they fire you? I hoped they'd let you stay until your contract expired."

"There was a pother when I but 'tempted to teach my class an exceeding simple spell. A child in my own—why, a babe in arms should know it! And a mage of some apparent dignity, who had been a-spying on my pedagogy, conducted me to a private apartment where he and divers other learned gentlemen broached a folson of witless queries."

"W-who do you mean?"

"A pathetical sway-backed antick who termed himself 'the head of the department.' He then desired that I return to my own quarters t'attend his pleasure."

"You mean Professor Brunschweiger asked you to go home?" Dora's soft visage quivered and she burst into tears. A fixive wench, in truth, but she wept right prettily. "It's the end, Philip. You'll be fired and you'll never get another job on a campus. We'll starve."

"Be of good cheer, beloved," he consolated, drawing her fubsy form down to his side. "For with you t'inspire me, I am certain sure that in some other employment I may make a more efficacious use of my skills."

The future was not so dark then. Nay, if all that could happen was that he'd be expelled from his post, why, 'twould be a rare good thing. He would set up as wizard ordinary and thrive in this fond world. The loss of his receipt did not matter so much, although he'd prefer to have it to hand should he be imperiled again. Nevertheless, 'twas a relief to hear he'd not be broken on the wheel —he had not fancied the idea at all.

"But you can't do anything else but teach, honey," Dora objected. "You keep complaining about that all the time. Philip, sometimes you almost seem like a different man entirely."

"I am a different man, dearest chuck," he said, putting his arms about her. "Believe me."

She smiled at him. "I do, Philip. Truly I do."

HE had forgotten to ask Dorothea how to get out of the room, Philip² disgruntledly realized. But then, since she obviously knew he was not her husband, she probably wanted to keep him there. Not that he blamed her really, he thought, observing his reflection in the watery depths of a gilt-framed mirror.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall," he said. "Who is the handsomest man of all?" He waited expectantly, but the mirror proved to be a

very ordinary mirror, after all, and made no reply.

He wondered how he'd look in the costume of this world. Not bad, he decided!

And Dolly was a good-looking girl too, with, as far as he could judge from that flour sack she kept wearing, an excellent figure. If only she'd take care of her appearance. Perhaps he could show her how before he was snatched back.

He looked regretfully at the empty bottle that had contained, if not wine, then a remarkably good imitation. If he were a magician, he could probably conjure up more . . . or maybe even Scotch. He wondered idly how difficult it was to learn wizardry, just supposing that, for some reason or other, he'd be forced to stay on this plane.

One wall of the room was shelved, and held row upon row of books. Perhaps he'd find something useful among them. He peered at the faded gilt lettering on the backs. It was hard to read in such a dim light. The bottom shelf seemed to hold what he wanted: *Elementary Thaumaturgy*, *First Steps in Sorcery*, *A Primer of Necromancy*.

Philip² wondered with a trace of envy what it must be like to be trained from childhood in the foundations of magic. He reminded himself that, as a man of science, he could not admit the ex-

istence of anything so illogical as magic . . . what he meant actually was the new set of factual conditions and causes to which he was going to have to become accustomed.

And he knew, emotionally as well as mentally, that he dreaded returning to his somber and sterile life as a physics instructor back on his native plane. He felt an unpleasant little chill of embarrassment—of loathing—at the thought of awakening in the middle of the night and finding Dora, rather than Dorothea, lying beside him in the Swedish modern bed.

He made up his mind that he was going to do everything possible to ensure that Dorothea should not tire of him before he mastered enough necromancy to protect himself. For he knew that in his wife—or rather in his alter-ego's wife—lay his sole protection for the present against the incantations of a spell-run world.

He opened *First Steps in Sorcery*. In faded handwriting on the flyleaf was written: "To Dorothea on her eighth birthday, from her loving Aunt Hecate, October 31, 1929." And underneath, in a childish scrawl:

He who dares this book to borrow
Shall be a toad upon the morrow.

Dear Dorothea—how glad he was that he had not known her as a child!

It was not the intricate lettering and obscure phraseology alone, he was forced to admit to himself, that made the spells incomprehensible to him. He had almost given up when he found one that looked simple. He tried it.

"Hocus pocus," he said, "there's a crocus."

Nothing happened.

"I might have known," he sighed. "You've got to be born to this sort of thing."

And then he looked more carefully at the text. There was a magic sign to go with it. He moved his fingers carefully. "Hocus pocus, here's a crocus."

And there was a small white crocus in his hand.

HE stood looking at the flower, which was undersized and anemic, but undoubtedly genuine. "I did it myself! Look, Perkin!"

The cat rubbed his head against Philip²'s knee and purred approvingly.

"Hocus pocus," Philip² repeated, "there's another crocus."

And there was a big yellow one! Perkin miaued loudly.

"Mesceems y'are a flower fancier, good sir," said a dulcet voice, "for certes, never in this life have I seen so many croci."

Philip² turned and the lady smiled at him. She was tall and slender, with long green eyes and long golden hair parted in the cen-

ter of a broad white brow and drawn smoothly back in a knot behind her small head. Her robes had been designed by a descendant of the original Peeping Tom, evidently, and what they revealed was damned good.

Cosmetics, he noted, were not unknown on this plane of existence. Apparently Dorothea was one of those intellectual women who disdained all adornment. Or perhaps she worked so hard that she had no time to make herself beautiful. Poor girl, she did rush about while that good-for-nothing husband of hers had probably taken it easy.

He looked at the lady more carefully. There were emeralds in her ears and clasped around the slender neck, enhancing the white shoulders and bosom that rose out of the tight-fitting black gown. She must have money, he thought appraisingly.

Her voice was low and musical. "I seek the Lady Dorothea. She was to have attended me at my bedside this forenoon, but she came not, so, being anxious for her services, I came myself despite my malady."

"You must be Lady Alison," Philip³ said, smiling. "She just left for your place. You must have passed each other in—whatever it is you came through. But why should you need a love-potion?"

"Alas, all men have not the

same tastes," she sighed. "Just as all women do not. Now Dorothea has oft described you as a monstrous ill-favored and corky rogue—"

The other Philip must have been a 'good deal different in appearance from him, Phillip² decided, even though they were the same man. Strange, how much environment could affect appearance.

"—Whereas y're a proper and most courteous gentleman." Alison adjusted her hair with delicate white fingers on which more emeralds sparkled. "Could not you brew me the potion, good sir? I understand y're also a sorcerer of parts."

She was flattering him, he knew, for Dorothea would never have described her husband's abilities so favorably. And he was enjoying her flattery. However, much as he longed to impress the girl, there was no use in his meddling around with wizardry—unless she wanted a crocus, which seemed unlikely.

"I'm afraid I don't know how to brew a potion," he confessed. "If you'll give me your name and address, I'll write them down and tell Dorothea you called. She'll be sorry to have missed you." That was a good touch, he thought. He was picking up the business fast.

"Don't know *how*?" she repeated, her glaucous eyes widening. "You mean y'admit that y've no skill in sorcery?"

He stared back at her defiantly. "Well, if I can't do that kind of work, what's the use of making a fool of myself by pretending I can?"

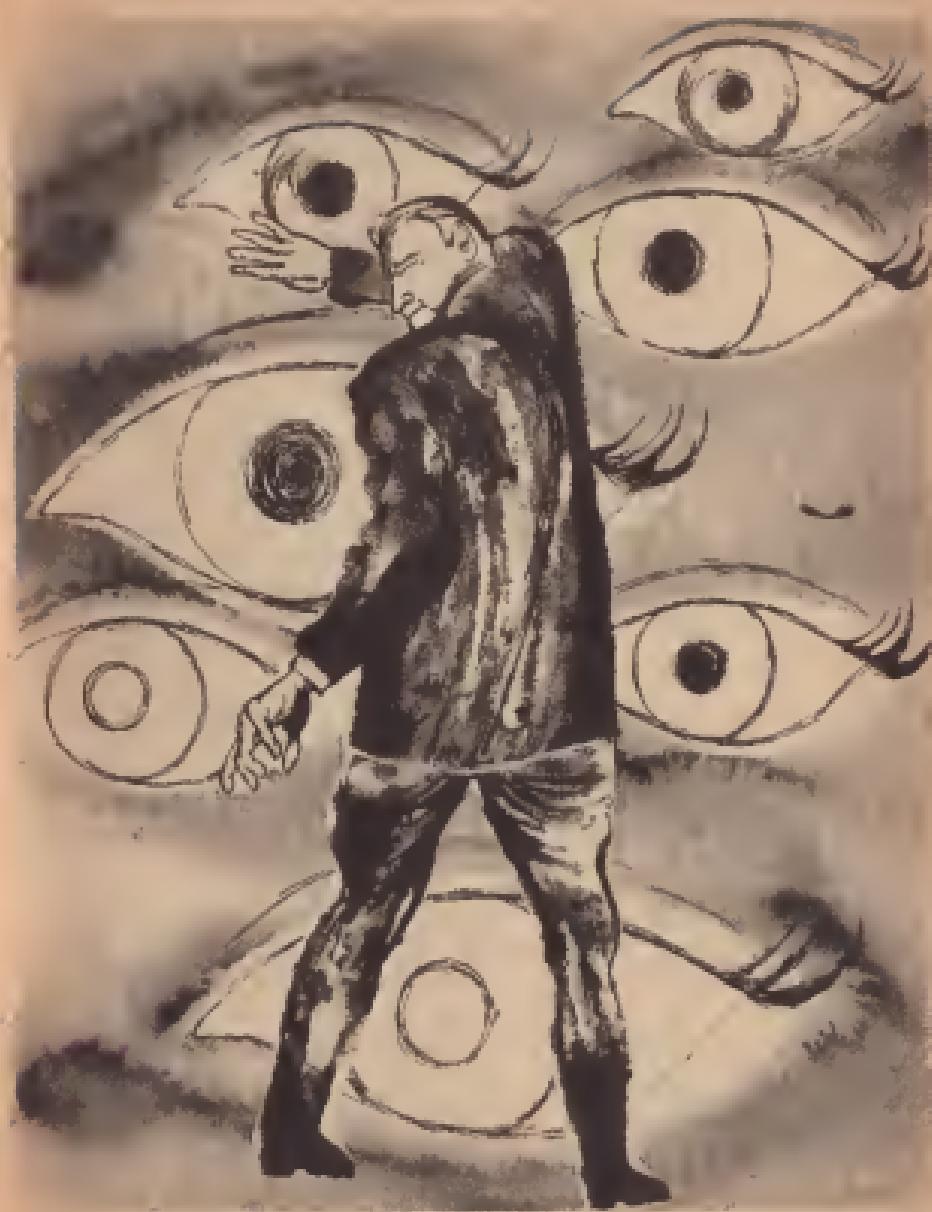
Probably he was spoiling Philip¹'s reputation, but it served the guy right for switching planes and sending Philip² to one where he was of even less account than his own. Still, if he could conjure up crocuses, he could probably go on to more advanced spells under Dorothea's loving guidance.

SUDDENLY a horrid thought struck him. What if Philip¹ came back and insisted on assuming his old place and his—former wife? What could he—Philip²—do to stop the other? And then he took comfort. He might not know what to do, but Dorothea would. She'd take care of him. She'd take care of the other Philip, too, if he dared to stick his ugly nose back in this world! Women like Dorothea, he decided, had many uses beyond the kitchen and the bed-chamber.

Alison was speaking ". . . I ne'er thought I'd see the day when a man'd willingly accept the fact that the male is not the female's equal for wit and wizardry."

She moved closer to him. He liked her perfume; it was heavy and sensuous—he must buy Dolly a bottle of the same, if she'd lend him the money.





CALL ME WIZARD

"By my troth, y'not only have a seemly assemblance, but are a modest and soft-spoken fellow into the bargain. I like you well and if it so happens that y'are not indifferent to me, we'll need no magical arts or love potions . . . for the ead for whom I destined the brew was, although well-enough favored, a very coistrel like my own forked lord—who is, moreover, foul to boot."

"Really, madam!" Philip² took a step backward. After all, he was married to Dorothea—as far as Alison knew, anyhow. Although, from what she'd said, it seemed as though Alison also were married, so you could hardly expect her to show much respect for other people's legal ties. He was still too unsure of himself to beg for trouble on this alien plane.

"Be not strange with me, sweet necromancer," she breathed huskily, advancing upon him. "A little backwardness is admirable in the man, but not when 'tis carried too far. Once I spurned a youth who, though beautiful as the sun, blushed and shrank overmuch. Shortly afterward the poor knave died of a decline. Take warning by this."

Philip² retreated further. He had never objected to a little harmless flirtation—only Dora had—but the flirtation he saw in this predatory female's eye as she reached out for him did not impress him as harmless.

Flight would be unmanly . . . besides, where could he flee? He wished Dorothea would return. He, a male, needing protection from a woman! But then he was a stranger, lost in a strange world. And Lady Alison was both attractive and dangerous.

There was a hissing sound. Perkin thrust himself between Alison and Philip², his green eyes blazing defiance, his back arched into a hoop as he spat at her.

"I see you're not entirely without protection," Alison said smoothly. "Dorothea, I apprehend, was not so casual, after all. Still, my bent is great and so I am minded to test the extent of the cat's powers."

She came on. Philip² was afraid something terrible was going to happen, for Perkin was growling and swelling up like a fury balloon. He did not so much care if Alison came to harm, but he looked upon the cat as a friend. Yet all he could do himself was hiccup faintly. The wine must have been enchanted.

ALISON looked at him and her shining eyes seemed to grow to three times their former size. "You must come out of this house with me. The spell is too powerful here. Come!"

"I—I can't," he said. "I don't know how."

"Move your fingers in this wise!" she commanded. "Do it,

knavc, do it! And do it rightly!"

He obeyed, partly because he wanted to know the spell and partly because he was afraid of her. He repeated after her the mystic chant, "Neutron, deuteron, positron, proton,/Blessed or dia-bolic, you'll/Spread apart each molecule;/While we are in transi-tu,/The atoms part to let us through,/So we pass through walls or doors,/Windows, ceilings, halls and floors;/Neutron, deuteron, positron, proton . . ."

And he found himself out in the street. There were houses ranged on both sides—rows of semi-detached houses all exactly similar in style just like those of his own Dulcamara Drive. Only the architecture was different and he found it, in the cold blue light that poured down from a strange sky, singularly unpleasant. It was charming to have gargoyle as water spouts, but he didn't like the way they were watching him. Dorothea had been right in keeping him inside.

Why had he ever let this woman lure him out into the street—this woman who, for all of her beauty . . . if you could call anyone beautiful who had golden snakes for hair and tied the poor little things in a knot. He could call the SPCA—they might help the snakes if not him. But there probably was no SPCA here. People here were most likely cruel to animals.

Animals!

"Perkin!" he called. "Perkin, save me!"

A miau of anguish came from inside the house—but no cat.

Alison smiled. "He cannot leave the house, for Dorothea has so devised it. Why think you I led you out on the street, sweet geck? But fear not, I shall do you no hurt s'long as you serve my purpose."

There was nobody to help him. And Lady Alison was coming toward him purposefully again. What was he to do?

VI

A bell shrilled. Philip¹ leaped from his seat.

Dora smiled wanly. "You're all on edge, dear. That's just the door. It must be Brunschweiger." She lifted the front window cloth slightly and peered out. Use of his crystal would have been less cumbersome, but he could hardly suggest it to her. "Yes, it is—and there's somebody else with him. It must be a man from the FBI or something."

She turned and faced him, breathing heavily. "Philip, they mustn't see you!"

"Whatever you will, my love," Philip¹ subscribed, and made himself invisible afore he betheought himself of what he was doing.

She gave a faint shriek and

clapped her hand across her mouth. "Ph-Philip!"

He reappeared again. "Sorry, my love, a temporary aberration." But no madness could extenuate this, he knew.

She gripped him by the shoulders. "Philip—or whatever your name is—I know you aren't my husband. I don't care who you are. But what are you?"

The bell pealed again—tolled rather, Philip thought, straightening the lapels of his upper garment.

"No time t'unfold the matter now, sweet," he said, patting her hand. "Fore God, he loved this dame a-life. First I must front these good gentlemen."

"Do you think you can get away with it?" she asked. "It's the way you talk, mostly—not a foreign accent, but—but like an actor or something."

"Rest you easy, gracious lady," he consolated. "I've already affronted the professor and he does not doubt that I'm your spouse. Befike he fancies I'm bestraught. In any case, I needs must face them, be it soon or late."

"Aye," she said dully. "Oh, Lord, I'm beginning to talk like you! That's wrong—you've got to learn to talk like me!"

"Of a certainty," he agreed. "And as soon as I have dealt with these snipes, you shall apply yourself to my tutelage in your charming dialect."

The bell rang again.

She clutched his arm. "He'll be angry at being kept waiting," she said. "Maybe we should pretend we're not home."

He thrust her aside gently. "Nay, love, ours must be the bold face if we're to—as you most aptly remarked—'get away with it'!"

She looked at him with a respect and worship he had never seen in Dorothea's eyes. "Now I'm sure you're not my husband," she breathed.

Professor Brunschweiger, a large, paunchy varlet, wearing barnacles attached to a black ribbon, stood on the doorstep. With him was another knave whom Philip¹ had not yet encountered—a fellow younger and ruddier of face.

"I give you good-den, gentles," Philip¹ said heartily. "Certes, I could ha' wished for no better company to disturb my afternoon's rest."

He expected his superior to be as wroth as he had been the previous day, but Professor Brunschweiger's voice was surprisingly mild as he whispered to his companion, "He's been talking like this for the last couple of days."

The other spread his hands wide. "The vagaries of genius," he sighed. "I've had to deal with so much of it, Professor."

Dora peered at him from under Philip¹'s arm. "Who are you?"

"Dr. McIntosh," Professor Brunschweiger said with gentle reproach, "is a representative of the United States Government."

"The FBI!" Dora wailed. "I knew it; I knew it!"

Philip¹ trembled. Apparently it meant the Iron Maiden, after all!

BRUNSCHEIGER and McIntosh looked at one another. "Seems to be catching," the professor said. "May we come in, Mrs. Gardner?"

Dora and Philip¹ stepped back silently to permit them to come in.

"But what ha' I done?" Philip¹ burst forth suddenly. "What's amiss? I swear I had no baleful intent, whate'er 'twas I did."

"Sometimes I wonder," Professor Brunschweiger told the government man, "how much of his aberration stems from a breakdown and how much from a distorted sense of humor. You know what he was doing—the class asked him how the anti-gravity unit worked and he was actually teaching them a spell. A spell, mind you! And the little fools were swallowing it. I don't know what the younger generation is coming to."

Dr. McIntosh laughed heartily. "Twas apparent he thought whatever Philip¹ had done to be of a merry nature.

Philip¹ gave a weak laugh. "I must avow I am a gamesome rogue," he confessed.

"But why didn't you confide in me, Philip?" Professor Brunschweiger asked with sorrow. "If I hadn't dropped in to observe your class at just that moment, I might never have known . . . The reason I was sitting in on the class," he explained to Dr. McIntosh, "was that we're thinking of recommending Dr. Gardner for an assistant professorship."

There was a loud gasp from Dora.

"An assistant professorship, of course," Dr. McIntosh agreed. "And no more than he's entitled to, from what I hear. I imagine he wanted to surprise you, Professor Brunschweiger. And also—he probably wanted to test the—the device—in front of the students to make sure it wouldn't blow up. Isn't that so, Dr. Gardner?"

"I could not have phrased it better myself," Philip¹ agreed with him, amiably enough.

"Now, sir," Dr. McIntosh said, declining his person forward, "I might as well be frank about my reason for coming here. As soon as he saw your demonstration, Professor Brunschweiger telephoned Washington and they got in touch with me immediately. I'm their field representative working in this vicinity. The government, Dr. Gardner, as you may have guessed, is interested in the anti-gravity unit which you have developed."

"One of our instructors," Professor Brunschweiger crooned. "One of my professors! It'll make the school!"

"Will it also make Philip?" Dora inquired.

Dr. McIntosh smiled. "He's already made. Wait until you see the afternoon paper! . . . Dr. Gardner, I would like to see a demonstration of your anti-gravity machine. If it works — and I'm sure I can take Professor Brunschweiger's word for it, only I must see it myself—the government is prepared to negotiate generously. Between military and industrial use, it will mean millions for you."

"Millions . . ." Philip¹ repeated thoughtfully.

"Millions!" Dora cried. "Millions! Oh, Philip, darling!"

Whatever the millions were in, he reflected, they must be valuable for Dora to grow so avid. Let the momes have the formula . . . but 'twould be of no avail to teach their government the spell, for they'd not credit such a thing. Still, given time, he could fashion some device that would have the semblance of an engine, yet contain the spell within it.

His pensive eye fell upon the phonograph. The very thing—although he'd have to alter its outward seeming somewhat so that it should not be known for what it was.

"The device has gone a trifle awry since I last made use of it," he explained. Being a tricksy rogue, he could outwit anyone in this innocent realm. "Were you to return on the morrow, I should be right glad t'unfold to you the result of my clever conclusions."

"Tomorrow it is," agreed Dr. McIntosh enthusiastically. Everybody shook hands all around once more. "Mrs. Gardner," the government fellow said, "you have a great man for a husband!" *

Dora put her arm through Philip¹'s and squeezed it amorously. "I know," she breathed.

"Oh, push!" Philip¹ said modestly.

THERE was a shriek: "Ho, housewife!" And Dorothea stood in the middle of the street, her cloak still swirling with the sudden cessation of movement, her hair in wilder disorder than ever, her bosom heaving with breathlessness and fury. "So, foul jade! Make love to my own charitable lord, would you, th'instant my back is turned! Fitchew!"

Alison was as calm as if nothing out of the way had happened. "Y'came not to me in time, good chewet," she shrugged, "so I did graciously dispatch myself to your abode. How was I to know y'had already set forth? And who's to blame me for seeking some solace? I could scarce have whiled

away the time of waiting by conversation with your spouse, for, as you've so oft observed yourself, he's as witless as a cucumber."

Just see how smart you'd be if you were suddenly stuck in a strange universe. Philip² thought venomously.

"Giglet!" Dorothea spat. "Can y'not clap eyes upon a fair man—or for that matter a foul one, for you're marvelous indiscriminate—without trying your liberal arts upon him? Well 'twas y'could not pass th'entrance examinations to the School of Sorcery. Had you sufficient skill to brew your own potions, by my troth, there's not a man in America but who'd have been in your chamber by now!"

"Dolly!" Philip² protested. "You shouldn't talk like that! To a customer especially!"

Dorothea gave vent to derisive laughter. "Customer, aye, you have the right word for her, sweet knave. A customer she is indeed! Come lip me for that, peat!"

She kissed him soundly. "Let us within the house—it's mortal cold out here."

And they were back in the warm, relaxing firelight. Perkin pattered forth to greet them with a miau of relief.

"He did his best, Dolly," Philip² said as the sorceress was about to reproach the cat. "He really did."

Perkin rubbed his velvety head against Philip²'s hand.

"Aye, he did his best, Dolly," Alison sneered. "But a cat, after all, though he be no worse than a man, is no better either."

"What!" Dorothea cried. "You dare to follow me back into the house, strumpet, after your shameless behavior?"

Alison shrugged. "I need no defense, sorceress, for well you know that I'm a dame of strong affections. Y'should have come festinately with the potion. And you should not have let so lovesome a fellow out of your sight—he's so natural, I wonder that half the female livers in town have not been set afire by his modest habit. Or have y'kept him mewed up like a sheep?" She gave a metallic laugh. "Aye, I can see by your face that y'have. Doll, you lack proper assurance to be possess't of such a man."

SO Dorothea had not kept him locked up to keep him from getting out, but to keep other women from getting in. Or, rather, from discovering that she had such a prize as he—for there was no keeping anyone out in this universe. Dear little woman—he hiccuped again—she thought only of his welfare. Not like Dora, who cared only for herself.

Alison continued airily: "Sith I observe I shall get nowhere with your spouse—although, had you not arrived so incontinently, there

might have been another tale to tell—will y'not concoct me a mess of th'amorous drug, sweet charmer, so that I may fascinate another?"

Dorothea snorted. "How d'ye ken I'll not put behemoth in't?"

"Because the whole world knows I purchase my charms from you," Alison yawned. "Did they think you to have slain me a-purpose, 'twould be imminent, but they'd be certain sure you'd put the poison in by misprision. Would y'wish to be known as a slitherly sorceress?"

Dorothea grunted.

"I'm your best client, Doll," Alison went on. "Don't forget, such conquests as I have effected without the aid of magical arts—and they have been notable ones, perch!—ha' been ascribed to your mysteries. If y'poison me, you poison your own best advertisement. And all for the sake of such a trumpery thing as a man. Fie, Doll, you're too tricksy a dame to do a fond thing like that."

"Y'have the right on't," Dorothea agreed, moodily opening various cupboard doors and flinging ingredients into the pot. "However, henceforth do not call upon me here at my abode. If y'have need of me, send for me. I'll not have my husband jaded by your irregalous suggestions."

"As y'will, good sorceress," Alison said, slanting her long green

eyes provocatively at Philip². He lowered his. "And now the potion. Pray be expedient, for I am fancy-sick, though I care not overmuch whom I fancy."

Dorothea waved her hand over the cauldron. "Take werewolf's eyes,/The wings of flies,/A mandrake root,/ And then add to 't/ The liver of a dove,/A griffin's bone,/A hollow groan,/A corpse's feet,/And it's complete—/The elixir of love."

There was a flash of blue flame from the pot. Dorothea dipped her ladle into the brew, which had a most unaphrodisiac odor. In fact, Philip² thought, he seemed to have smelled the same thing somewhere before, and very recently, too. She filled a small vial with its smoking contents.

"Mind you, lady," she said as she handed the bottle to Alison, "make yourself a stranger to my spouse or I'll not guarantee that my emotions will fondo my business acumen."

"He's a goodly fellow," Alison said, handing Dorothea three ducats, which seemed to be a standard fee. Socialized sorcery, probably. "Yet there are other men as goodly. But there's no sorceress can brew a love potion as cleverly as you, Doll."

She blew a kiss at Philip². "Now you know the way out of this house, pray visit me when y'can escape your mistress's eye. I dwell

at 1313 Verbena Avenue and the latch-string will always be out for you, charitable rogue."

And, before Dorothea could utter a word of protest, she vanished.

"Dame Alison takes on as if the potion were destined for the man," Dorothea remarked, "although she needs not such at all, being a well-favored woman, although in a fashion I myself, were I a man, would not admire."

She looked an anxious question at Philip².

"Oh, I don't think she's anything so special," he said. "It's the clothes and the paint. If you fixed yourself up like that, Doll, you'd look a thousand times better than her."

"D'y'e think so?" She turned to look at her reflection in the mirror. "Y'may have the right of it, at that." Then she sighed. "Marry, but I'm clean forspent!" She sank into a chair. "Would you be good enough, love, to store my gabardine? Sooth t'say, I have not the strength for so simple a task."

PHILIP² obediently hung her cloak in the wardrobe. He realized that, though she had couched it as a request, it was a command and if he stayed in this place, he would have to continue following her orders. Unless he could get his own science to work properly . . .

She sighed and relaxed into the

depths of the chair. "The potion Alison desires is rather to revive her own flagging energies, for she can conceive of no other pursuit in life save that of the opposing sex. But y'made stout resistance, Philip," she went on, "and I could not altogether ha' blamed you, had you complied with her riggish purposes—specially since you were fuddled wi' my best Madeira, for I winded your breath, rogue, when I bussed you. Wenchies like her, with wealth and leisure at their fingertips, have more time t'give to the blandishing of men than the knaves' hard-working spouses."

"Dorothea," Philip² said, lurching slightly, "you know perfectly well that I am *not* your husband. I should have realized from the start that a sorceress like you would have known right away. The trouble is, I don't believe in sorcery. The whole thing's—it's illogical."

"But our logic is not your logic, fond knave," Dorothea said in a voice that was unexpectedly tender. "Just as yours would seem irrational to us. I thought you'd ha' brained that by now. Truth to tell, I did think y're were my own Philip at the start, for you're marvelous like him. And though I knew he purposed to visit another realm, to be open about it I ne'er thought he'd succeed. The varlet had more doctrine than I allowed."

"You knew about the other—

place then?" he asked, incredulous.

"For sure I did. Did I not tell you that you—that is, your counterpart—chanced upon the spell in an old tome? Who d'ye think left the book lying about for him to chance upon? No, I was awearied of the valanced snipe, yet for the sake of th'affection in which I'd held him once, I would not feed him any mortal drug. But I little thought he'd make the effort to replace himself, either so that I'd not ken where he'd gone, or more like, so that there'd be a station for him in the other world. He had a certain cunning; I'll grant him that."

"But if you knew . . ." Philip² began. "Why didn't you . . . ?" He found himself blushing.

She patted his hand. "Certes, I could ha' transported you incontinently to bodge my mate's facinorous stratagems, save that on the sudden—I'll coyly confess—I took a fancy to you. And so I'd as lief keep the bargain the way it stands if you subscribe and, seting that y'have no escape from this realm, owning not even so much of the rudiments of sorcery that my old fere had, y'needs must concur."

"Needs must," Philip³ agreed. "As a matter of fact, Dolly, I think you're a most attractive woman and I want to stay. But speaking of sorcery, haven't you noticed all the crocuses lying about? I—"

There was a dull boom in the

distance. The room shook slightly. Both Philip² and Perkin jumped in the air, clutching each other.

"There goes the princeeling's spell!" Dorothea observed complacently. "The brat took so long, I'd well-nigh forgot it. I knew not that we'd hear the hurley this far distant. Methinks he chose his moment well—and caught his family with their spells down."

She dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief. "But 'tis meet that I show decent grief—for we were kin. Aye, Philip, I have royal blood coursing in these veins and if my charm was as thorough as 'twas loud, y'may find yourself of higher estate in this realm than e'er you fantasied!"

Philip² was aghast, but palace intrigues were an important part of history. Maybe he could get accustomed to them. He hiccuped. After all, others did.

VII

THE WAS pleasant, Philip¹ mused, as he gazed out the window at the twinkling street lanterns and above them at the black sky studded with the same luminaries as lit his own realm, to be able to see what lay outside by looking through a crystal pane 'stead of into a crystal ball. For to use contrivance for something that should be unstudied detracts from its natural pleasure. This was a

natural world, not a very wise one, mayhap—but then he was not an absolute genius himself.

He sneezed. "I must apply to th' apothecary for those marvelous powders of which you spoke," he said sheepishly to Dora. At first he had refused to let her procure them for him, but now he had altered his opinion. Very likely, a local disease would be more susceptible of cure by a local remedy. He must not be proud-stomached about the native magic if he planned to live as a native himself.

"*Druggist*, dear," Dora said. "Not *apothecary*."

"*Druggist*," he repeated obediently.

They were sitting side by side on the couch, holding hands as if they were courting, which in a manner of speaking they were.

"Philip," she asked, "what are we going to do if Philip—if the other Philip—comes back?"

He caressed her tenderly. "I've been a-musing on that very question mine own self," he murmured, "for I'd be right loath t'have him change places with me again."

"And I'd be right loath—I wouldn't want him to, either. Philip—" she rested her head on his shoulder—"could you—that is, is it possible for you to make a trip to that other world and come back here?"

He sighed. "Unfortunately, I

cannot, sweet. I ha' not told you, for I did not want you to despise me as a drumbling wretch—"

"I'd never, never think of you as that!" she said fervently.

"By mischance, I lost the spell which would enable me to return."

"But how can you lose a spell?"

"Th' ingredients of the magic powder which I use along with the incantation—I had them in a phylactery about my neck and somehow I lost 'em. Oh, well." He patted her hand. "I ha' no need to go back."

"Would you have gone back before if you'd had them?" she asked. "Is that the only reason you're staying, because you can't go back?"

"By my troth, no! Have I not told you? Ever since I glimpsed you in my crystal, my only thought has been to make you mine own!"

"Yes, you've told me," Dora murmured. "I wish I knew what to believe. Wait a minute."

She quitted the room. He could hear her heels clicking on the stairs. What pretty thing was the wench up to?

She was back eftsoons. "I don't know whether I'm doing the right thing, Philip." And she gave him his lost phylactery.

HE looked at the small velvet bag in amazement.

"I took it off your neck the first night you were here," she ex-

plained. "It did smell so! I thought it was an assafetida bag or something. And you never seemed to miss it. Lucky I didn't throw it away."

He took it in his hand. "Wench," he asked, "are you certain sure you didn't know what 'twas?"

"How could I know, Philip?"

"There is no possible way," he mused, "and yet sometimes I wonder whether I am wrong in thinking the magic of this realm is primitive—that mayhap it's so devilish deep, it lies beyond my braining."

"Don't be silly, Philip," Dora giggled. "There is no magic in this world. Nobody with any intelligence believes in such a thing. I know you have magic, of course, but it's all right for another plane of existence."

"Aye—er—yes," Philip said. "When you put it that way, everything becomes crystal clear."

"Now that you have the spell," she asked, "will you go back?"

"But I vowed to you, sweet mouse, that I have no wish to return. I wish but to bide with you."

"Good. Then you've got to go back."

He stared at her in total bewilderment. "As long as I wish not to return, I must? The sense of it eludes me."

"Don't you understand?" she pursued. "You've got to go back

and make sure the other Philip can't possibly come here. That's the only way we can be safe."

"'Tis a sad thing to confess," he said dolefully, "but my artifices are no match for Dorothea's. If she tires of the wight, she would send him here and me there despite aught I did to thwart her."

She looked thoughtful. "Maybe you could—well, sort of kill him. Without," she added hastily, "really killing him, I mean. You know, use your magic to put a spell on him or something."

"Which Dorothea would negate, if she wished, with scarce a moment's thought."

"All right, then," she said firmly. "Get rid of him or have somebody do it."

He gawped at her. So sweet a lady and so sanguinary! Almost she minded him of Dorothea. But all the sex had much in common and bloodthirstiness, he supposed, was a feminine trait.

"Why," he protested in agitation, "I could ne'er do't! He is my own person, my very counterpart! If I slay him or have him slain, 'twould be the equal of suicide!"

"It's nothing of the sort," she insisted. "I know him better than you do and the two of you are not a bit alike, any more than this—this Dorothea person is like me! Besides, she's probably making his life wretched and it would only be putting him out of his misery."

And not only that, why should we live in constant fear that he'll come back?"

"Perhaps he'll never find the way," he suggested hopefully.

Dora snorted. "She'll show him, never fear. She'll want to get you back and she'd know the best way to do it would be to send him here to mess up everything. I know these slick women—always up to nasty tricks. She won't be satisfied till she dumps him back on me."

Of course she was right. Dorothea would be seeking ways and means to retrieve him. "Twas the Devil's own problem to solve and he mauled his mind to find a solution.

"I have it!" he cried, inspired. "This is not the only realm. Why should not your erstwhile spouse choose another? I can transport him from one to other until he finds one as much to his liking—" he embraced her tenderly—"as this one is to mine."

"It's too good for him," she objected. "And how could we be certain Dorothea wouldn't find him in one of those places and send him here so she could get you back?"

"Ah!" he said cunningly. "I may unwitting transport him to a realm where he'd be devoured by wild beasts or savages. But then the blame would not rest on

me. Would you have a husband bowed down by guilt, liefest?"

"I suppose not," she said reluctantly. "Men always have such annoying consciences when it comes to something they don't really want to do." She twisted in his arms. "Philip, when will you go back? Tonight?"

"A—yes, I could do that," he agreed. "But first I must consult my crystal to see what they're doing."

"You have a crystal ball with you?" she squealed. "And you never showed me? I think you're mean!"

She peered intently into the glass with him. "He seems to like her very much," she said drily. And indeed the two were seated companionably enough—even amously—before the fire, with a bottle of the best Canary before them. Philip's arm was around Doll's waist; i faith, Dorothea's love potion must have been a mortal strong one.

"Is that her?" Dora queried. "I don't think she's so bad-looking."

Philip strained his eyes. Was that in truth Doll? Why, the wench had bedizened herself, incarnadined her lips and cheeks and braided her blazing locks atop her head! And the flaunts she was wearing, cut in the accustomed style of the amorous ladies of the town and fashioned out of Cyprus, which, despite the stitcheries upon

it, still offered little substance to block the questing eye. The wanton jade—she had never bedecked herself in such wise for him! Were she not so latten thin, y'might almost term her handsome.

"You need barnacles, my sweet," Philip¹ said, kissing Dora's cozy plum-cheeked face, "for she's a monstrous ill-favored besom. Clever, no doubt, but that's all."

"You don't like intellectual women, do you, Phil?" Dora asked, snuggling up to him.

"My dear," he said, "I loathe them."

"Go back now and tell him he mustn't come here ever," she commanded, "or else you'll send him where he'll like it even less than where he is now."

"Will't not wait until the morrow?"

"Now!" She looked up at him, dimpled. "Pretty please."

"Oh, very well." It looked as if, one way or another, he was born to be ruled by a woman.

PHILIP¹ took the precaution of remaining invisible so that he might not be espied by Dorothea afore he could draw his counterpart aside for parley. He wanted to run no risk of encountering Doll, for he knew she'd be hot to get him to return.

As he gazed at the reechy tapesries and Turkey cushions of his quondam room and breathed in

the rich aroma of its vapors, he could not restrain a half-sigh of regret. "Twould take some little time t'alter the appointments of his new realm according to his inclinations. But Dora was a sweet and complaisant lady so far. She'd fall in with all of his desires.

"What ails you, Philip?" Dorothea demanded, and Philip¹ well-nigh replied until he saw that her remark was addressed not to him but to the other. He was much put about to hear that his shill-gorged Dorothea now cooed as gently as a dove. "D'yօu not love me?" she asked. "You said y'did not so many minutes agone. Are you so changable then?"

"I do love you, Dolly," the hilding said in a voice like the lowing of an ancient cow. He took her hand in this. What was that upon her talons? Philip¹ squinted. Colored varnish, as he lived and breathed. Marry, Doll was festive at picking up the wanton tricks of another realm! "More than I ever did Dora," t'other Philip whined. "But there's no place for me in this world."

"There's no place for you in your own world either, scroyle!" Philip¹ thought, "as you'd discover with a wainion, were you t'attempt a return passage."

"How so?" Doll asked, still addressing Philip². "Will y'not be my loving husband, t'aid and comfort me and help in my work? Is that

not sufficient honor for you? Moreover, you can assist me with my magicking. Why, you learned the spell for conjuring up croci in no time. I was monstrous proud of you."

"Were you really, Dolly?" Philip² asked, brightening.

"Of a certainty I was proud. Why, my sometime spouse could not pick up a spell so festinately. I did but instruct him in a few of my simpler mysteries, and wi' such small skills the drumblin' varlet set himself up as sorcerer."

"Why, the saucy ronyon!" Philip¹ thought indignantly. "I've forgot more about sorcery than ever she kenned. Simply because I was not able to get first honors, as she did by cozening the Board of Examiners . . . Od's pittikins, avaunt, Perkin!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, for the cat, having descried an old companion, was rubbing against his trousers to show he was no fair-weather friend, digging his claws in the luxurious texture of the tweed and purring most melodious to show his pleasureance.

HE was mazed that the keen-witted Dorothea took no cognizance of the whoobub, and concluded that she was indeed be-straight—which would serve to explain so much of her fantastical behavior. Fancy-sick for that pallid snipe, push!

"Aye, liefest," Dorothea murmured, incilipping Philip²'s waist, "you'll abide at home and tend the house and help me with my spells and—" the wench actually blushed, unless Philip¹'s eyes were enchanted—"haply our progeny."

"But—but—" Philip² protested, "I want to be something in my own rights, as I was in my own universe."

"Oh, aye," Philip¹ thought. "A second-rate pedant—what dignity is there in that? Why, I ha' made you—or rather myself—a national figure of heroic proportions. Your whole world has fallen at my feet in abject admiration. Were you to return now, you'd find yourself in a pretty coll . . . And these wonders I have contrived with the 'small skills' the jade affects to despise. Why, I'd flee from existence to existence unto fineless infinity rather than return to you, Doll . . . !"

"Honey mouse," Dorothea said, embracing the barefaced Philip² more tightly, "why can y'not understand that because the goal of man and the goal of woman differ, each cannot be equally worthy in his own right? Chew upon this—if 'tis I who have the greater brain, 'tis you who have the kinder heart. And I, thinking with my brain, and you, loving with your heart—together, sweet consorts, we'll form a pair that will hold sway over this world."

"Doll waxing sentimental!" Philip¹ thought incredulously. "Why, the wench has gone clean out of her wits! A rap over the costard with the ladle was ever more her fashion."

"D'you not apprehend, sparrow?" Dorothea asked. "If this existence is pleasing to you, 'tis because it expects naught of you save what lies within your natural powers. And you have powers that perchance you never dreamed of. My tricksy tutelage will make a second-rank wizard out of you—that's a grade higher than my spouse ever was."

"Gee, Dolly," Philip² said eagerly, "that would be wonderful. But do you think you can teach me?"

"Of a certainty I can, for y're already half-trained as sorcerer."

"I'm a scientist," Philip protested.

"'Tis the same thing. What though your world's magic be of a rudimentary nature, still the important thing is that science or magic or whate'er you term it is your profession. Oh, I'll make a parlous wizard out of you, lad, never fear."

"I'd like that," Philip³ said. "Experiments are so damned messy. And even if I got back, I'd never be able to accept science properly again, knowing that the same thing can be done so much more simply."

SHE smiled at him. "So you'll abide with me, chuck? I could compel your attendance. However, if you would return to your own dwelling and your own spouse, but say the word and I shall transport you—though it break my heart to do so."

"She could have gone after me!" Philip¹ said to himself wrathfully. "She could ha' pursued me to the next realm and plucked me forth like a gillyflower, had she been so minded. She didn't want me, the strumpet! I've a mind to return to her now, even though it be only out of spite!"

Philip³ looked up at Dorothea. "Dolly, you've convinced me. I'll take me a little time to get adjusted, though."

"Of a certainty," she agreed. "And I'll assist to the best of my not inconsiderable skill."

"The conditioning I've received from my former environment will be hard to overcome," he went on. "There are certain deep-rooted psychological factors."

"I'll brew you a potion that'll clean wipe away all conditions and psychological factors and suchlike evil spells," she murmured tenderly.

"And now one kiss, my love," she added. "I have a small matter to which I must attend ere we seek our couch. There's a maggot crept into this room from the woodwork and I needs must fordo

the miserable creature, else the house will be crawling with vermin."

"Yes, dear," Philip² said, kissing her.

Dorothea had never bussed him in such wise, Philip¹ thought resentfully as he followed her into an antechamber.

"Make yourself apparent, wretch!" she cried in her familiar shrill tones. "Twas evident she'd not forgot her rope-tricks, after all. "Once a jolt-head, ever a jolt-head! Didn't not occur to you, mome, that enchanting the sense of sight so that none could see you had no effect upon my other senses? I could hear your snifflies whooping through the room like the wheezing of an asthmatic ass. What ails you—an ague? Th'ailments of another realm are monstrous plaguey. But you'll not die of this one, coistrel, more's the pity!"

A fine thing—a dutiful wife would have been a-cosetting and a-posseting of him . . . But then Dorothea had never been dutiful and, if things went according to stratagem, she was no longer his wife. Still, she might have hewed him a remedy for old time's sake.

"AND then poor fond Perkin rubbing 'gainst your legs!" she went on. "Marry, I knew not whether to laugh or weep! Know y'not, fool, that I can sense when-

ever an intruder enters the room by the tingling of my toes—all enchantment notwithstanding?"

"I'd heard of this power peculiar to those of the blood royal," he admitted grudgingly, "but I'd not believed it."

"Well, you can believe it now!" She let her eyes course over his exterior and shrieked with laughter. "What manner of strange apparel are you wearing, fool? In truth, y'look the veriest ape."

"Your Philip, chewet," he retorted, stung, "is garbed in the same fantastical dress, for indeed th'attire I flaunt is his very own. Yet he seems not amiss in your eyes."

"His vestures accord well with his form," she said, "though I intend to clothe him in velures and gold as befit his estate. But such garb as he affects sorts not well with you, for it reveals entirely too much of the person for a cavallero as gorbellied as yourself."

He swallowed his wrath just in time, remembering he wished to placate her. "My customary habit would ha' caused tongues to clack in f'other realm," he replied mildly. "But what estate is't you speak of? For fustian was ever good enough for me."

"Philip," she said, roundly changing the subject, "y'know I'm the better sorcerer."

"Y'have some doctrine that I

have not," he acknowledged. "For I was denied th'opportunity to do graduate work, sith I'm not one to blandish the Dean."

"I could send you back to t'other world any time I listed."

"Agreed, now that I apprehend you know the spell."

"Or I could send you to any realm of existence I fancied, including some of surpassing unpleasantness."

"You could, dear heart, you could. But would you?" He looked at her with sorrow as palpable as he could make it. "I, your own dear spouse for nigh onto a decade. After the tender memories we've shared together, would you use me so scurvily?"

"We were wedded when we were too young to know our own minds," she said. "Consider, you were but two-and-twenty and I a year your junior."

"Yes, there was the difference of a year between us," he replied.

"Philip," she said, "I have become much affected. I must agnize, of this fellow you substituted for your own uncouth self. I know you've come back to me, but you've played your knavish tricks once too often. I'll have none of you."

"Verily?" Philip¹ groaned. "Oh, this is indeed a cruel blow!"

Her voice was almost soft. "I know it must be, Philip. But I think I can be happier with him

than ever I was with you. If you had any affection for me, there should still remain some small desire in you for my welfare."

"Dolly," Philip¹ said in broken tones, "I must avow I am not made of adamant and you have moved me more than I can say. Take him —I hope you'll both be very happy."

HE buried his face in his hands and managed to shake his shoulders convincingly.

"I'm glad you're putting a good countenance upon't," she replied with gentleness. "And after all, remember, Philip, 'tis you I love, but slightly altered."

"Twill serve to comfort me in the long, lonely reaches of the night," he sighed, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

"The law will accept this Philip as my husband. It must, for I am . . . However, be that as it may, I do not know whether you found the wench that was my Philip's wife pleasing. He says she is not."

"Why, the . . . ! Why, she's well enough," Philip¹ said cautiously. "Naught to compare wi' you, Doll—somewhat sunburned and mean of height—but well enough."

"So, Philip, I give you your choice—either you journey back to my Philip's realm or to any realm of your choice. So long as y'do not stay here, 'tis importless to me."

Philip¹ drew a long breath. "In such case, I think I'd as lief return to the one I have just quitted. 'Twould be a prodigious burden upon Dora—that's the name of the wench there—were her husband to keep a-altering and a grief were he to disappear entirely . . . for she's a poor fond dame who needs a man to lean upon. I must think of her. Perchance I have thought overlong and overmuch of my own sweet self."

"Philip," Dorothea said, "I

think the change has made a better man of you."

"Aye, Doll," Philip¹ agreed, readying himself for the return journey and Dora's waiting arms.

But she was looking speculatively past him to where Philip² awaited. "D'you think," she wondered aloud, "there might be still better in other realms?"

Evelyn E. Smith

FELINE FACTS

Cats have been objects of mystery for most people since at least the early days of the ancient Egyptians, who elevated them to godhood. Their aloof self-possession, their silent slithery movements, their inscrutability all have played important roles in the human tendency to consider cats a species apart, to credit them with magical powers, to assign them as witches' familiars.

Even other types of cats regard our Manxes and Persians and Siamese and Angoras as something different. It is a fact that housecats give lions nervous breakdowns. And cats continue to baffle scientists. Unlike rats or dogs, they aloofly refuse to perform laboratory tests on demand. If they are hungry, they'll figure out how to get the food. But if they don't want it—they simply start washing themselves.

Yet cats are not mysterious once their motives are understood. Take the attested case of the suburban tabby, who vanished regularly on Thursday evenings at 8:24, and returned home at 10:36. Puzzled, her people finally followed her one Thursday and discovered that Tabby was cutting across neighboring back lots to a window in a church where a weekly bingo game was held. She would watch the game, which broke up at 10:30, then come home. Motive? Research—like most cats, she enjoyed studying human beings make idiots of themselves.

tag

*'Twas the day after Christmas, and
Santa got a gift of his own.*

By ROBERT ABERNATHY

ONCE there was a man who hated Santa Claus.

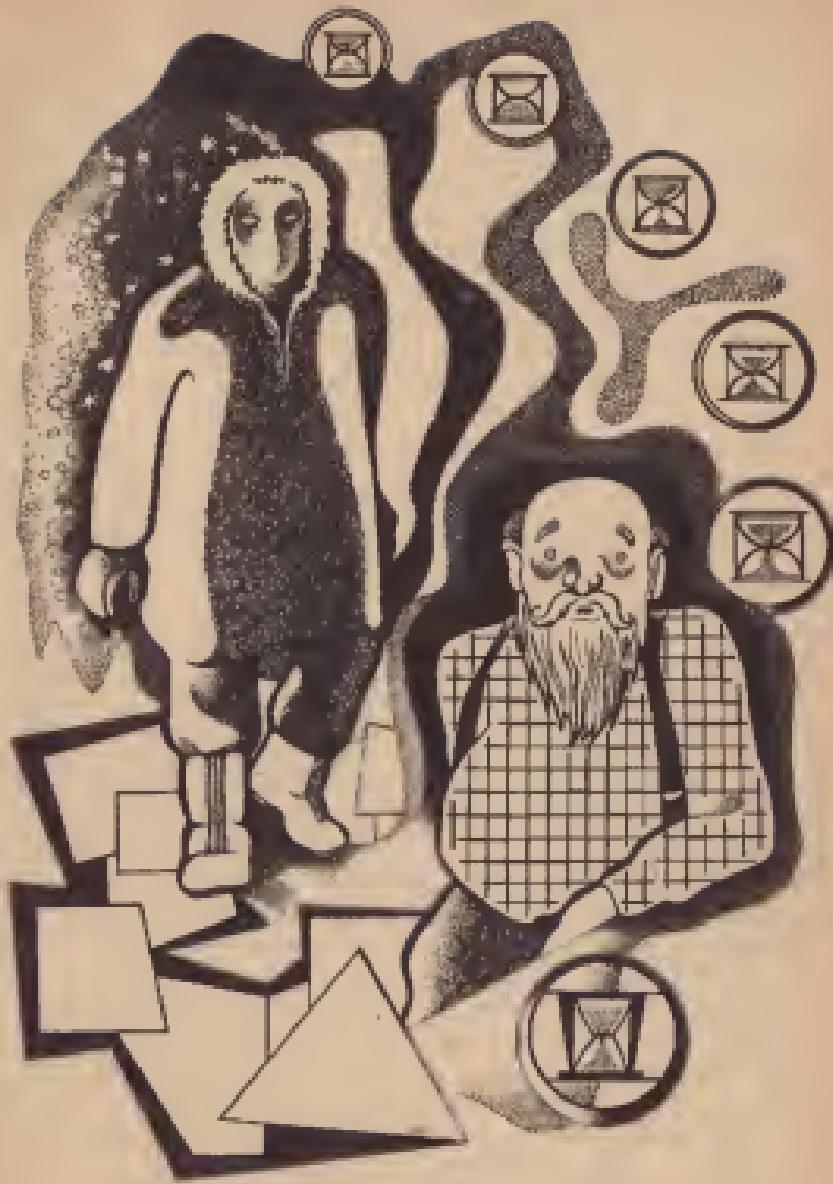
Not for the reasons you might imagine; he had neither wife nor child, nor, now that he had come to middle age, any other living relatives whom he need remember at Christmas, or who might remember him . . . but perhaps that was why.

Or perhaps it was because, when he was still young and credulous, someone had told him that there is no Santa Claus.

However that might be, at every Christmas season this man suffered the tortures of the damned. He could not venture out without meeting his enemy—red-suited, white-whiskered, bell-ringing, guffawing with a false and hateful joviality—on every street-corner, in the public places and the shops, pictured, posterized and effigied.

He knew, of course, that the department store and Salvation Army Santas were only mummers; nevertheless, he could not pass

Illustrated by CONNELL



them without a surge of unreasoning anger, and he looked with bitter and lofty contempt at the swarms of children—and grown-ups, too—fawning upon the despised saint.

Early in one dreary December, having gone to one of the great stores to make some everyday purchases, he found himself compelled to visit the lavatory. There to his horror, he beheld no less than three Santa Clauses, who had retired thither to smoke cigars and talk shop.

At sight of them, the newcomer lost his head.

"Damn you!" he shouted. "Must you hound me everywhere I go?"

The three stared. One of them, a tall, skinny Santa, asked, "What's eating you, mac?"

The man drew himself up, fists clenched, trembling a little. "Do you realize," he demanded bitingly, "that you're living a lie? That you are impersonating a most abominable fiction?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed a squat Santa without benefit of pillows. "Listen to this, boys . . . the character's a comedian!"

"ASSAULT and battery," said the arresting officer, and then in a hushed aside, "Your Honor, this is the guy that socked Santa Claus."

"Dear me!" said the judge. He

eyed the accused as if seeking to deduce from his appearance the motive which had led to this atrocious behavior. "Why did you do it?"

"It was a mistake," said the prisoner unhappily. "For a moment . . . I don't know what came over me, Your Honor, but it seemed as if it was really Santa Claus before me, not just a man in a red suit."

The judge blinked incomprehendingly.

The prisoner added by way of explanation, "I hate Santa Claus."

"I don't believe in jailing mental cases," said the judge. "If you promise to consult a psychiatrist, I'll let you go with a fine."

The psychiatrist listened raptly to the tale of the man who hated Santa Claus. Once or twice he nodded. Finally he said:

"Ah, yes. Clearly, a paranoid delusion complex, with overtones of hypertrichophobia. Very similar to the trouble of a former patient of mine, an industrialist, who also thought himself followed by men with beards. In his case, they were Bolsheviks; in yours, they are Santa Clauses—but at the unconscious level it is all much the same thing. The root of your difficulty lies, of course, in the Oedipus complex; for you, Santa Claus is an image of your father, whom you also hated."

"I don't see how that could be,"

said the patient. "My father died ten years before I was born."

"All right," said the doctor a little huffily. "You tell me why you hate Santa Claus."

"Because he's too good to be true. No one could possibly be so inexorably jolly, generous, good-natured, altruistic. See how they picture the fat saint, slaving year after year in a stuffy polar workshop, rushing madly around the world on Christmas night to shower gifts on millions of unworthy and ungrateful recipients! You and I know that we are mean, stingy, greedy creatures—human beings. How could we endure to live in a world that held such a monster of benevolence?"

"What would we think of a man who behaved like that in real life? We would call him insane, and fear and hate him as a mad and dangerous man. And . . . what would such a man suffer in himself, as his madness drove him to violate the sacred creed of the ape, his grandfather: 'What is mine is mine and what is thine is mine'? Why, he would be the most miserable being on earth!"

The psychiatrist took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. "A difficult case," he muttered a little hopelessly.

"I've considered suicide," said the man dully. "Would you advise it?"

"Eh? . . . No, certainly not!" The doctor roused himself. "You must

face your problem, not flee from it. You must fight this thing!"

At home, the man brooded over the psychiatrist's words. He had tried fighting before, but his blows had fallen only on innocents, such as the department store Santa. Yet his spirit was not broken. Determination came to him; he sprang to his feet and smote the table with his fist.

"This time," he swore, "there will be no mistake!"

He went out, drew all his money from the bank, and chartered a plane for Baffin Bay. At a trading post he bought a gun, warm clothing and provisions. He rented a dog team and set out across the Arctic ice.

For many days he fought his way northward, following the compass needle through blinding blizzards and sunny days when the immense snow-fields were one featureless glare. His fingers and toes froze; he grew gaunt and haggard, and sprouted whiskers which the bitter wind festooned with icicles; yet he plodded on, upheld, like many a hero before him, by indomitable will.

At last, he came in sight of the North Pole. It was morning of the day after Christmas, but the Pole was sunk in winter darkness.

Trembling with cold and excitement, he peered through the dimly-lit windows of Santa's workshop.

Inside, as far as the eye could see, was a gargantuan confusion and disarray—scraps of wrapping paper, empty boxes, crates, barrels, chips, shavings, string, wire, nails, screws, damaged and leftover goods, jumbled in places almost to the ceiling.

On a bench in the midst of all this appalling litter sat Santa Claus—shoulders drooping, white beard unkempt, red breeches rolled up and feet buried in a tub of steaming hot water. The old saint was staring fixedly at the floor, as if afraid to look up and see the chaos which last night's furor of activity had left, from which order must yet be restored before another long year's toil could begin.

With infinite stealth, the man pushed the unlocked door open and circled around among the rubbish-heaps so as to come upon his quarry from behind. At such close range that he could not miss, he cocked the gun loudly.

SANTA Claus turned and looked wearily, and with a curious absence of surprise, at the level-

ed weapon and the bristling, furred, burning-eyed figure behind it. There was an instant in which the silence stretched to the breaking point, and then—

Santa Claus chuckled. "You surely don't mean it, young fella," he said benignly. "Nobody shoots Santa Claus."

"Oh, don't they?" the man snarled, and fired. His aim was true.

But Santa Claus's expiring breath still carried a ghost of the chuckle. "Son, the joke's still on you," he whispered. "Now you're it."

He vanished. All except for the red suit and white beard, which fell to the floor.

The man dropped the gun and tried to run. He couldn't. He stopped trying, walked over and picked up the red coat and put it on. It was cold in here, and he had a mess to clean up with almost a year to do it.

Robert Albernatny

The ghost maker

By FREDERIK POHL

*What better way is there
to kill a scientist than
with curiosity?*

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

M R. ELLIOTT was an amiable man, but an alert one. Nevertheless, I had no difficulty in getting from him what I wanted. I had never thought of myself as a shrewd businessman—but obviously the foul treatment the Museum had given me had sharpened my wits, made me able to gain a victory where I chose.

My credentials from the Museum—still, as far as he knew, perfectly valid—were most helpful,

and I suppose that what finally decided him was my promise of the Museum's mailing list in exchange for his. Naturally I had no objection to making this promise. I would have promised him Walter, the ninety-foot stuffed whale, and all fourteen meteorites out of the entrance hall if he had asked for them. They cost me nothing, after all.

At any rate I got the subscription list to *Phoenix*.

Magazines like *Phoenix* do not have the enormous subscription lists of the smooth-paper giants of the publishing world. The list Elliott gave me was quite small enough to be workable. And when I made the obvious deletions—striking out all the saints' names, all addresses like Christchurch, Trinity Place and so on, plus all names like Gottesman, Dorothy and their blessed etymological equivalents—I was down to a mere page.

I packed my toothbrush, the holy water and such other items as I absolutely needed and set out.

THE first three or four names on the list were blanks. I wasted an afternoon on the lower East Side and the better part of a day in Bensonhurst without turning up anyone over the age of fourteen. I was beginning to wonder if my theory, after all, was valid, when I began to approach paydirt.

Name number five, a water-witch in Chelsea—number eight, a red-bearded old necromancer in a monstrous old house on the Jersey shore—number ten, a part-time ghoul who taught biochemistry in a New England university and was the idol of the cleaning ladies because he never left messy bits of cadaver on his workbench. He was so neat, they always said.

I didn't even need the cross or the holy water for these. The shock

of confrontation, the realization that they had been tracked down where they thought they were unfindable, was enough. From each I took one thing, as the laws provide. A charm from the witch, a perfectly disgusting recipe from the ghoul; from the necromancer a curious variation on the crystal ball, an opaque sphere that answered questions—opaquely, however.

None of these was of any great value, but my theory was confirmed and, besides, I learned a great deal from their reactions. I felt confident that when the one I sought turned up, I could handle him.

By Friday evening, I was two hundred miles from the city, across the line from Pennsylvania, feeling as calmly certain of success as any man can feel. The next name on my list was number thirteen—happy omen! I had been looking forward to it and when I saw the house I was doubly encouraged. I paid off the driver and, kicking rusted cans and torn copies of communist publications out of my way, reached the front door just at dusk.

No one answered my knock. I tried again, ignoring the fact that the door gave every indication of being on the point of collapse, and thumped it hard. No answer. This was in no way a disappointment. I had discovered early that, in my

present occupation, it was best to learn as much as possible about the quarry before meeting it face to face.

I took the opaque ball from my pocket and asked it if the person who inhabited the house would return within ten minutes. The ball's answer was, "According to my information, no," which was about as satisfactory as it could be, for there was a strong implication that the ball's prophecy was hampered by strong opposing forces.

For safety, I allowed myself a mere five minutes to survey the house. It was an ancient frame structure, a potbellied stove in every room, sunset light filtering through cracks in the walls. The cellar was ankle-deep in mushrooms and it appeared that the occupant of the house had been systematically tunneling away at the foundations.

The indications were most promising.

I THINK even now that it is best if I don't mention the man's name. He was so clearly just what I sought that I paced the floor waiting for him. It seemed hours, but there was still an afterglow in the sky when I heard him at the door.

He was astonished to see me sitting in his living room, but at once he knew what I wanted. The

overnight bag, with its flask of holy water and other useful items, was by my hand. He pretended to ignore it, but I observed that he brought himself up short at the door.

"Hell," he said bitterly. "Even here."

I chuckled. "Yes, even here. Shall we get right down to business? Or would you like to pretend you don't know why I came?"

He smiled weakly. It was curious to see the pointed teeth in that round, mild face.

"I might as well own up," he said. "You've got me. There are only two reasons why you would have tracked me down with all that stuff in your bag. One of them obviously doesn't apply—if you were going to try to reform me, you wouldn't be wasting time in talk. Therefore you want something. All right. One thing, though, if you don't mind. How'd you locate me?"

I could afford to be casual. "Simple," I said. "Elementary deduction. Farmers read *Country Gentleman*—bankers read the *Wall Street Journal*. There aren't very many magazines dealing with magic and diablerie, after all. It would have been a lot more difficult to believe that magicians and diabolists would not subscribe to *Phoenix*. All I did was eliminate the casual readers. You and your friends were left."

"Don't call me a diabolist," he said sharply. "You're lucky I'm not. You come across one of them, hoy, and he'll eat you up—sprinkled with the rosemary and garlic out of your suitcase, and washed down with the jug of holy water. Simple magic, that's all I do."

"Oh?" Perhaps he was telling the truth—I couldn't be sure. It was to some extent a disquieting thought—that perhaps I had been treading on the thin edge of danger—but, after all, he was nothing to fear. He had said so himself.

I shrugged. "It makes no difference," I said. "I've got you. I won't make any threats, but by the laws and the powers, I have a claim on you."

Astonishingly, he laughed a little and the muscles of his scalp twitched his woolly black hair into alarming shapes. "Sure you have a claim. You're entitled to one of my spells. Well, why not? What's your pleasure? Card-reading, love potions, the gift of tongues? The power to turn into an animal? You only get one thing—name it. What do you want?"

I said levelly, "Revenge."

HE glanced at me in momentary alarm. "Bad revenge—killing, you mean? No. Can't do it. I'd get in trouble." I made a gesture toward the hag, but, though he gulped and sweat showed brightly on his brow, he shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he said. "I don't care what you've got in that hag. There isn't anything you can do had enough to make me use the arts to do someone harm. No."

"But I've been humiliated!" I cried. "I'm a scientist—one of the greatest anthropologists alive, a fellow of the Museum, the author of three definitive texts. And because I had the wit to see what was clear before my eyes, because I said in public that magic is not superstition and not nonsense, I've been deprived of everything I've earned in thirty years. I must have revenge!"

He snapped his fingers in recognition. "I know who you are! Ehrlich—something like that—is that your name? I saw in the papers. Well, I can't say I'm sorry you got in trouble. I have enough headaches now without any more people suspecting that men like me really exist."

I stared at him, aghast. The callousness of the lay public toward the gathering of data and its dissemination has always horrified me . . . though I suppose that, on this particular subject, he was scarcely a layman. But it was irrelevant.

I said, "What you want makes no difference. I want revenge. I can compel you to give me the means to it."

He shook his head.

I said angrily, "Are you trying

to tell me you don't know any harmful spells?"

"Of course I do—really harmful too. But I can't use them. That's black magic. I can't show you how, either. Law of Equivalences—if I show you how, it's the same as doing it myself."

I thought quickly, wondering if he was lying. It was hard to believe that after coming so far, this was to be the end of my plans.

I said, "Perhaps I'll just keep going until I find a diabolist."

He chuckled.

"Well," I said in annoyance, "what else can I do? I am not a man to take this sort of thing lying down. I've suffered—Brandon must suffer, too. I've been laughed at—I've been made to resign from the Museum—I've seen my life's work pushed down the drain. Brandon did it. I can't let him go on enjoying life."

"Oh," he said easily, "you don't have to let him *enjoy* life. Nothing lethal, naturally. But how about hives, for instance? Three sentences and one pass of the hands, that's all you need for hives. Or raise a plague of insects wherever he goes. Or you can scare him out of a year's growth if you like—I've got a pretty good spell for raising ghosts. One word and an amulet—I've got the amulet right here. Or you can make him fall in love with the first person to pass by. Take your pick."

IT wasn't what I had had in mind, of course. Still . . .

"Tell me more," I said.

He nodded and rubbed his hands. "Glad to see you being reasonable. How about getting rid of that stuff first?"

I set the bag outside the door. When I came back, he was sprawled carelessly on the couch, worrying the cork out of a bottle of California wine.

"Magic's thirsty work," he said apologetically. "I thought we might have a little drink."

From my point of view, it was a good development. On second thought, I could improve on it. I sent him for a bucket of spring water and showed him the trick the water-witch had taught me of transforming the water into sidecars.

From then on, things proceeded handsomely, though I have some qualms still about the tiny blue ghosts of long-gone waterbugs and mice we conjured up for practice and released upon the countryside. But he assured me they would cause no trouble.

He had to go to the spring for another bucket before we were through, but water is cheap.

Perhaps he became drunker than he planned, for he let slip a piece of information which I think he had meant to keep secret. The ghost-raising spell was infallible—it worked every time. With it, you could touch even the most

dered bone and create before you the wraith of the being whose articulation had comprised the bone. Or you could touch a living, breathing creature and evoke its ghost.

And once the ghost was evoked, the creature, perforce—was dead.

Of course, murder was not what I had in mind for Brandon—not quite. The offense had been great enough, but on the long trip back to the city, I had leisure to reflect on my friend's fear of the consequences of lethal magic, and to decide that I needn't go that far. Brandon was a pompous fraud, but if I could make his life its own punishment by means of harassment, there was no need to risk unknown penalties.

Besides, in a way—and especially now that the means of retaliation was at hand—I rather liked Brandon. I felt cheerful and mellow. What I was going to do to him was more of a practical joke than a condign punishment.

I got back to the city Sunday night and waited until late Monday to go to the Museum. Brandon's work habits were well known to me—at closing time on the first day of the week, he would inevitably be in his office.

I came in through the subway entrance, where the crowds are heaviest. The guard didn't see me, sparing me the need for telling him a lie. I went directly to the Hall of African Mammals and





waited in the shadows there until the floor guard was out of sight. There was an exhibit room that had been *Temporarily Closed* as far back as I can remember and I still had the key that opened its door.

BY half-past five, the Museum was deserted except for a rare guard, a few tiresome scholars like Brandon, mooning over their journals—and me. When I opened the door of my hiding place, it was full dark. Only the stairwell lights were visible.

Brandon's office is in the Paleontology wing on the third floor. I crept out of the exhibit room toward the stairwell, but before I reached it, a thought occurred to me and I acted on it.

If you have been in the Museum, you've seen Leo. He is not the largest African lion on record, but he is nine feet from nose to knobbed tail and no one passes his pedestal at the entrance to the Hall of African Mammals without at least one quiver at the back of the neck.

As quietly as I could, I dragged the night guard's chair over to Leo's pedestal, stepped up on it and went through the ritual of power. My friend had given me the necessary amulet, an apple-sized tangle of woven willow. I touched Leo with it on his stuffed flank and said the word I had learned.

There was a flicker and at once, like a chrysalis leaving its cocoon, a pale bluish lion-shape slipped out of the embalmed figure and leaped noiselessly to the floor. The ghost of Leo stood immobile for a long second, his enormous nostrils testing heaven knows what impalpable atmosphere for scents. Then the jaws gaped, and with a sense that had nothing to do with my ears, I heard—or thought I heard—his majestic roar.

I confess that for a moment I was breathing hard. My friend had said very positively that the wraiths could neither touch nor harm me or anyone else . . . but when the lion-ghost saw me and charged, paws flailing and jaws dripping non-corporeal foam, it took a major effort of will to hold my ground. Leo went through me with no more effect than an imaginary chill. He spun round, batted at me with a substanceless paw, roared another of those soundless roars and then blinked and laid back his ears, like a housecat caught misconducting itself under a bed.

I exulted and ignored him as I headed for the stairwell. The Akely group of elephants tempted me for a moment, but I passed them by.

On the third floor, temptation grew stronger. Just off the stairwell, I entered the halls I had helped to arrange, sturdy glass cases with their tablets and stones recording eras the world has long

forgotten. I nodded at the Jonas fragment, for it was that, with its clear story of Nilotic wizardry that I had transformed and Brandon sneered at as a fable, which had led to the break.

Too bad, I thought to myself, that the stone itself had never had a life, so that I could evoke it as the unarguable refutation of everything Brandon had said . . .

And I realized, of course, that though the stone was hopeless, the hall was littered with objects which were not. Beyond the stone's case, for instance, was the sarcophagus of the Boy Pharaoh, lid standing beside the case, mummy slim and erect within it. They were plainly visible in the half-light. Though the glass case was locked, I still had on my key-ring the means to open it.

IT was, I thought, worth taking a moment's time out. I looked around carefully, but, though I did see something move behind me, on examination it turned out to be nothing but the lion-ghost gliding restlessly down the hall away from me, its long tail lashing. I almost chuckled aloud as I thought of his finding his way out into the Park—and of the newspaper headlines and statements for the press that the "authorities" would have to make.

But, for the moment, I had several other things on my mind.

I lifted the mummy out. A patch of shoulder, the color of clay and the texture of canvas, was bare. I touched it with the woven willow and whispered the word.

There was a faint, unheard rustle and I became aware that I was not alone. It took a second for the bluish figure of the Boy to show itself—but there it was, cat-eyed, hawk-nosed, eyes open and looking at me.

There was an emptiness in them, a vacuum where there should have been expression, which I found horrible to look at. I do not think my horror stemmed from the fact that the ghost was a ghost, but because of the incredible ages that had elapsed while this thing lay moldering in the flesh and God knows where in the spirit, before I recalled it with the spell.

The Boy opened his thin lips and spoke imperiously. In my mind I heard the words, but of course they meant nothing. Though I know modern Egyptian well enough, there was no single sound in what the Pharaoh said that I recognized—and naturally there were no phonemes in the ancient alphabet I had learned to translate. He said something else—then snarled, spat at me, turned and walked off.

I let him go. When the Boy ruled Egypt, he was eleven. The greatest good fortune the Egyptians ever had was that he failed to

reach his twelfth birthday.

I watched the slight, stiff figure stride imperiously away. Then I opened the door to Brandon's office.

He stared at me like Joan staring at the White Lady. "Ehrlich!" he gasped.

"Of course," I said. "Did you think I would go quietly away and die? I have something to show you, Brandon."

On his desk was a conjur bag from the Gold Coast. I shook the contests out of it, discarded the herbs and the rocks, picked up the knucklebones for prophesying.

"Magic," I told Brandon in echo of his own words, "is ninety per cent lies and ten per cent half-understood science. There is no truth in superstition. There are no ghosts. Correct? All right—watch!"

I will say for the man that he didn't scare. Now, on thinking back, I must have seemed a dangerous figure to him, appearing at his door in a menacing manner at a suspicious time. But he sat watching me with all the poise of a freshman observing a demonstration of the precession of the pendulum. I touched the dry bones with the amulet and whispered, barely whispered, the word of power.

There was a surging of forces and in the room with us was a wizened, irritable-looking black man, no taller than my shoulder,

as ugly a wraith as any I had seen.

I turned to Brandon. "Would you care to comment?" I asked formally.

BRANDON'S hands were shaking, but he pursed his lips and touched his fingers together before he spoke.

"These are not controlled conditions," he said. "But still—yes, Ehrlich, I may have been too hasty. If I owe you an apology, I will give it. I will listen to anything you care to say."

And he poured a glass of water from the carafe on his desk—and the only thing that showed he was in the least upset was that the glass filled and overflowed and the water ran across the desk and drenched his trousers before he took his eyes off the furious Bantu wraith.

"Sorry," he said absently. "What are you going to do about him?"

"Forget him," I said. "He will go away. Listen—can you hear him talking?"

In my mind was a clacking, lip-smacking chant of anger that matched the little specter's gesticulations. He was jumping up and down around us, whirling about with his arms outstretched.

"Interesting sight," I said. "I suppose he is trying to exorcise us, which is really curious under the circumstances."

"That noise is driving me insane," Brandon complained. "Let's

step outside and leave him here. I want to hear more about this, Ehrlich."

I followed him outside. The little Bantu shouted soundlessly after us, but did not pursue. We walked a few yards down the hall, as far as the entrance to the Hall of Reptiles, before the guttural yells died away from our inner ears.

The taste of revenge was fully as sweet in the realization as it had been in the hope. With smug assurance, I told him what I had done after he had, in his obstinacy, driven me to throw my written resignation in his face. I told him how certain I had been that practitioners of magic were abroad in the world—how I had deduced that they would read magazines of magic and the occult—how I had most laboriously tracked down an adept whose spells could not be explained away.

"I came back here," I finished, "to make you eat your words, Brandon. But now—well, I think perhaps I can do still better. I may even ask you to write a paper for publication, admitting all your idiocies."

"This spell," Brandon persisted desperately, "it works on anything? Any corpse or fragment of skeleton or anything that was once alive? It never fails?"

"Never. Here—I'll show you."

I beckoned him to follow me into the Hall of Reptiles. All

around us were memories of the saurian age before man appeared, the fence-like giant lizard bones, the thick-jawed creatures from earth's early fresh-water oceans, the enormous murderers that stalked the ferny swamps a hundred million years ago.

"Let's see," I meditated, "suppose we try something small. This one, for instance."

I gently lifted the cover off a little rabbit-sized lizard skeleton and touched it with the amulet. Once more, below Brandon's threshold of hearing, I whispered the word—and under my hands a bluish cloud swirled into the shape of a clumsy puppy of a reptile with frightened red glints in its agate eyes. The mindless trifle shuddered and flinched as it caught sight of us and scurried off into the shadows.

Brandon's hard-won composure vanished completely. "Good God!" he cried. "Ehrlich, do you realize what you've got here? What a tool for the paleontologists! They've been guessing and deducing and imagining what these things looked like—and probably guessing all wrong. Now you can show them!"

He was right, of course—there was no need to guess about the long-vanished fleshly envelopes of the skeletons they had so laboriously disinterred, not when a touch and a word could bring them back.

"Of course," I said coldly. "Perhaps I shall, in due time. But really, Brandon, can you imagine my having any desire to help the paleontologists?"

He gasped, "Ehrlich! What is this? What about the search for scientific truth?"

I laughed in his face. "The search for scientific truth took a holiday when I first came to you to discuss the subject of magic. I am not sure that I care to cooperate now that I am in a position to make my own terms."

He said rigidly, "You want your job back? You shall have it."

"No, Brandon," I told him, "bribery won't help you. The job is of no importance to me, you see. After all, I can earn a living in another way, if I choose. Television, perhaps. A turn on the vaudeville stage, if there still is a vaudeville stage — Professor Ehrlich and his Glamorous Ghosts? Cleopatra, Helen and Astarie, brought back before your eyes. I can do it, you know. Given a single fragment of a body, I can bring back its ghost as easily as I bring this one."

And, perhaps not entirely sanely—I was in a state not far from hysteria, I think—I thrust the amulet against the broad ribcage of the Museum's best brontosaurus, and watched the bluish spirit of the beast sluggishly drag itself off down the hall.

Brandon said sharply, "Ehrlich! Think this over!"

But this was my moment and I laughed at him.

Brandon and I heard the footsteps of the night guard.

CARELESSLY, I walked away from Brandon and the running, yelling guard. Stegosaurus was before me.

I touched a spiny bone and called over my shoulder, "Tell the paleontologists, Brandon."

The monster ghost appeared, writhing in convulsions—that beast had not died easily, for it was dripping spectral blood from a ripped cavern in its side. It fled clumsily from some eon-dead attacker, blundered through a wall and was gone.

I was shaken, but just before me was the massive bulk of tyrannosaurus.

I stabbed the amulet at a segment of the brute's skeletal tail, half-turning to Brandon and the guard as I said the word. I began to call to them some mocking phrase.

I looked back to tyrannosaurus. There was no bluish wraith, no movement in the ancient bones. I stood startled for a fraction of a second, then I heard a thud at my feet. I looked down, and froze.

There on the floor at my feet—visible through the lower part of my fearfully bluish, transparent

legs—was the limp and lifeless body of myself.

I did not at once deduce what had gone wrong, nor did I calm down enough at once to realize fully my new status—but it should have been obvious. All the world knows that no really old skeleton is complete. The small peripheral bones are almost always lost, dissolved or devoured by the time the excavators find the main bulk. And so the museums employ sculptors to piece out the missing parts in plaster of Paris—vulgar plaster, whose silicon chemistry was never alive and cannot yield up a ghost.

But as my friend had assured me, with what inner malicious glee I can only now appreciate, the woven willow never failed. And since there was no ghost to be conjured from the chunk of molded plaster, the amulet did what it had left to do and conjured up the ghost of me.

All in all, I have no alternative but to admit that my present way of life—should I say death?—has its compensations. I do not need to eat or sleep and I have the ancient little Bantu, N'Ginga, for company in the long night hours and when Brandon is away.

He does not wish to make our existence public as yet, though most of the upper-echelon staff of the Museum knows about us. And he has promised to find my friend from upstate New York as soon

as he can and learn how to release us from the compulsion to remain where we were commanded to appear.

MEANWHILE, I have my work, dictating to Brandon and his helpers all that I can remember of all the magic I had learned. Both N'Ginga and I are anxious to do whatever Brandon wants of us, you see, which is why N'Ginga is learning English. Partly it is because we want to advance the cause of scientific knowledge, and partly, too, because we are anxious to be released—it's a little lonely for us here.

It wasn't quite so bad while there were three of us, though the Boy Pharaoh was poor enough company. But when he ceased to be with us—I can't find the proper words to describe the process, you see—it was the first time any of us realized that ghosts were in some ways vulnerable.

It was entirely my own fault and carelessness. But I wish I had not been so free in conjuring up the ghosts of lions and lizards.

I have wished it more and more since N'Ginga came running to me, his face almost pale, to show me what ghostly lizard-teeth had done to the wraith of the Boy.



By JOHN WYNDHAM

PERFORCE TO DREAM

Her story was based on a dream . . .

but the dream was public property!

"**B**UT, my dear Miss Kursey," said the man behind the desk, speaking with patient clarity. "It is not that we have changed our minds about the quality of your book. Our readers were enthusiastic. We stand by our opinion that it is a charming light romance. But you must see that we are now in an impossible position. We simply cannot publish two books that are almost identical—and now that we know that two exist, we can't even publish one of them. Very understandably, either you or the other author would feel like making

trouble. Equally understandably, we don't want trouble of that kind."

Jane looked at him steadily, with hurt reproach. "But mine was first," she objected.

"By three days," he pointed out.

She dropped her eyes, and sat playing with the silver bracelet on her wrist. He watched her uncomfortably. He was not a man who enjoyed saying no to personable young women at any time; also, he was afraid she was going to cry.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said, earnestly.

Illustrated by ASHMAN

Jane sighed. "I suppose it was just too good to be true—I might have known." She looked up. "Who wrote the other one?"

He hesitated. "I don't know that we can—"

JANE broke in: "Oh, but you must! It wouldn't be fair not to tell me. You simply must give me—us—a chance to clear this up."

His instinct was to steer safely out of the whole thing. If he had had the least doubt about her sincerity, he would have done so. As it was, his sense of justice won. She did have a right to know, and the chance to sort the whole thing out, if she could.

"Her name is Leila Mortridge," he admitted.

"That's her real name?"

"I believe so."

Jane shook her head. "I've never heard it. It's so queer . . . nobody can have seen my manuscript. No one knew I was writing it. I—I just can't understand it at all."

The publisher had no comment to make on that. Coincidences, he knew, do occur. It seems sometimes as though an idea were afloat in the ether, and settles in two independent minds simultaneously. But this was something beyond that. Save for the last two chapters, Miss Kursey's *Amaryllis in Arcady* had not only the same story as Miss Mortridge's *Strephon Take my Heart*, but the

same settings, as well as long passages of identical and near identical conversation. There could be absolutely no question of chance about it.

Curiously, he asked, "Where did it come from? How did you get the idea of it in the first place, I mean?"

Jane saw that he was looking at her with a peculiar intensity. She looked back at him uncertainly, miserably aware of tears not far behind her eyes.

"I—I dreamed it—at least, I think I dreamed it," she told him.

She was not able to see the puzzled astonishment that came over his face, for suddenly, and to her intense exasperation, tears from a source deeper than mere disappointment about the book overwhelmed her.

He groaned inwardly, and sat regarding her with helpless embarrassment.

OUT in the street again, conscious of looking far from her best although considerably recovered, Jane made her way to a café in a mood of deep self-disgust. The exhibition she had put on was the kind of thing she heartily despised: a thing, in fact, that she would have thought herself quite incapable of a year ago.

But the truth of the matter, which she scarcely admitted to herself, was that she was no longer

the same person as she had been a year ago. A careful observer would have said that her manner was a little altered, her assurance more individual, though superficially she was the same Jane Kursey doing the same job in the same way. Only she knew how much more tedious the job had gradually become.

It is galling for a young woman of literary leanings to keep on day after day, for what seems several lifetimes, writing with a kind of standardized verve and coded excitement about such subjects as diagonal tucks, slashed necklines, swing backs and double peplums. It is frustrating for her to have to season her work with the adjectives *heavenly*, *tiny*, *captivating*, *enchanting*, *divine*, *delicious*, marching around and around like an operatic army, when her deepest instinct is to put her soul on paper—when, in fact, something so extraordinary has happened to her that she feels her spirit should be mounting skylark-like to the empyrean; that her heart is no less tender than that of Elaine the Lovahle; that, should the occasion arise, she would be found not incompetent among the bettaerae.

The publisher's letter, therefore, had, despite her attempts to retain a level sensibleness, given her a choky, heart-thumping excitement. It did more than disclose the first rungs of a new and greatly pref-

erable career for which many of her associates also struggled: it petted and pleased her secret self. The publisher had spoken of literary merit as if drawing a line between her and those others who worked with three-quarters of their attention on the film rights.

HER novel, he told her frankly, he found charming—an idyllic romance which could not fail to delight a large number of readers. There were, perhaps, a few passages where the feeling was a little Elizabethan for these prudish times, but they could be toned down with imperceptible loss.

The only qualification of her delight was a faint suspicion of her own undeserving—but, after all, was a dream any more of a gift than a talent? It was just a matter of the way your mind worked, and if hers happened to work better when she slept than when she was awake, what of it? Nobody had ever been heard to think the worse of Coleridge for dreaming Kuhla Khan rather than thinking it up. Besides, she would not be taken literally even though she admitted frankly to dreaming it . . .

And now came this blow. Something so like her own story that the publisher would not touch either of them. She did not see how that could possibly have happened. She had not told anyone

anything about it—not even that she was working on a book.

She gazed moodily into her coffee. Then, as she raised the cup, she became aware of the other person who had come to her table almost unnoticed. The woman was looking her over with careful speculation. Jane paused with her cup a few inches from her mouth, returning the scrutiny. The woman was about her own age, quietly dressed, wearing a fur coat that was beyond Jane's means, and a becoming small fur cap on her fair hair. But for the difference in dress she was not unlike Jane herself; the same build and size, much the same coloring; hair, too, that was a similar shade, though differently worn.

Jane lowered her cup. As she put it down, she noticed a wedding-ring on the other's hand.

The woman spoke first: "You are Jane Kursey," she said, in a tone that was more statement than question.

Jane had a curious sense of tenseness. "Yes," she admitted.

"My name," said the woman, "is Leila Mortridge."

"Oh," said Jane. She could not find anything to add to that at the moment.

The other woman sat and sipped her coffee, with Jane's eyes following every movement. She set her cup very precisely in the saucer, and looked up again.

"It seemed likely that they would be wanting to see you too," she said. "So I waited outside the publisher's to see." She paused. "There is something here that requires an explanation. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," Jane agreed again.

For some seconds they regarded one another levelly without speaking.

"Nobody knew I was writing it," the woman observed.

"Nobody knew I was writing it," said Jane.

SHE looked at the woman unhappily, resentfully, bitterly. Even if it had been only a dream—and it was hard to believe that it had, for she'd never heard of a dream that went on in installments night by night, so vividly that one seemed to be living two alternating lives—but even if it were, it was her dream, her *private* dream, save for such parts of it as she had chosen to write down—and even those parts should remain private until they were published.

"I don't see—" she began, and then broke off, feeling none too certain of herself.

The other woman's self-control was not good, either; the corners of her mouth were unsteady.

Jane said, "We can't talk in this place. My flat's quite near."

They walked the few hundred yards there, each immersed in

thought. Not until they were in Jane's small sitting-room did the woman speak again. When she did, she looked at Jane as though she were hating her.

"How did you find out?" she demanded.

"Find out what?" Jane countered.

"What I was writing."

Jane regarded her coldly. "Attack is sometimes the best form of defense, but not in this case. The first I knew of your existence was in the publisher's office about one hour ago. I gather that you found out about me in the same way, just a little earlier. That makes us practically even. I know you can't have read my manuscript. I know I've not read yours. It's a waste of time starting with accusations. What we have to find out is what has really happened. I—I—" She floundered to a stop, without any idea how she had intended to continue.

"Perhaps you have a copy of your manuscript here?" suggested Mrs. Mortridge.

Jane hesitated; then, without a word, she went to her desk, unlocked a lower drawer, and took out a pile of carbon copy. Still without speaking, she handed it over. The other took it without hesitation. She read a page, and stared at it for a little; then she turned on and started to read another page.

Jane went into her bedroom and stood there awhile, staring listlessly out of the window.

When she went back, the pile of pages was lying on the floor, and Leila was hunched forward, crying uncontrollably into a scrap of handkerchief.

Jane sat down, looking moodily at the script and the weeping girl. For the moment, she was feeling cold and dead inside, as if with a numbness which would turn to pain as it passed. Her dream was being killed, and now she was terribly afraid of life without it . . .

THIS dream had begun about a year ago. When and where it was placed, she neither knew nor cared to know—a never-never land, perhaps, for it seemed always to be spring or early summer there in a sweet, unwithering Arcady. She was lying on a bank where the grass grew close like green velvet. It ran down to a small stream of clear water chuckling over smooth white stones. Her bare feet were dabbling in the fresh coolness. The sunshine was warm on her bare arms. Her dress was a simple white cotton frock, patterned with small flowers and little amorets.

There were small flowers set among the grass, too: she could not name them, but she could describe them minutely. A bird no larger than a blue-tit came down

close to her, and drank. It turned a sparkling eye on her, drank again, and then flew away, unafraid. A light breeze rustled the taller grasses beside her and shimmered the trees beyond. Her whole body drank in the warmth of the sunshine as though it were an elixir.

Dimly, she could remember another kind of life—a life full of work and bustle—but it did not interest her: it was the dream, and this the reality. She could feel the ripples against her feet, the grass under her fingertips, the glow of the sun. She was intensely aware of the colors, the sounds, the scents in the air; aware as she had never been before, not merely of being alive, but of being part of the whole flow of life.

She had a glimpse of a figure approaching in the distance. A quickening excitement ran through every vein, and her heart sang. But she did not move. She lay with her head turned to one side on her arm. A tress of hair rested on her other cheek, heavy and soft as a silk tassel. She let her eyes close, but more than ever she was aware of the world about her.

She heard the soft approaching footsteps and felt the faint tremor of them in the ground. Something light and cool rested on her breast and the scent of flowers filled her nostrils. Still she did not move. She opened her eyes. A head with

short dark curls was just above her own. Brown eyes were watching her from a suntanned face. Lips were smiling slightly. She reached up with both arms, and clasped them round his neck . . .

THAT was how it had begun. The sentimental dream of a schoolgirl, but preciously sweet for all that, and with a bright might-have-been quality which dulled still further the following dull day. She could remember waking with a radiance which was gradually drained away by the dimness of ordinary things and people.

She was left, too, with a sense of loss—of having been robbed of what she should have been, and should have felt. It was as though in the dream she had been her rightful, essential self, while by day she was forced to carry out a drab mechanical part as though she were an animated clay figure—something that was not properly alive, and in a world that was not properly alive.

The following night, the dream came again. It did not repeat; it continued. She had never heard of a dream that did that, but there it was—the same countryside, the same people, the same particular person, and herself. A world in which she felt quite familiar, and with people whom she seemed always to have known.

There was a cottage which she could describe to the smallest detail, where she seemed to have spent all her life, in a village where she knew everyone. There was her work, at which her fingers flickered surely among innumerable bobbins and produced exquisite lace upon a black pillow. The neighbors she talked to, the girls she had grown up with, the young men who smiled at her, were all of them quite real. They became even more real than the world of offices, dress-shows, and editors demanding copy.

In her waking world, she came gradually to feel a drab among drabs; in her village world, she was alive, perceptive—and in love . . .

FOR the first week or two, she had opened her eyes on the workaday world with painful reluctance, afraid that, should the dream slip from her, it would not return. But it was not finished. It went on, becoming all the time less elusive and more solid until, tentatively, she allowed herself the hope that it had come to stay. And as the weeks went on, the dream continued, building episode on episode, and it began curiously to illuminate her daily "real" life and pierce the dullness with unexpected glimpses. She found pleasure in noticing details which she had never observed before.

Things and people changed in value and importance. She had more sense of detachment, and less of struggle. It came to her one day with a shock to find how her interests had altered and her impatiences had declined.

The dream had caused that. Now that she had begun to feel there was little likelihood of it fading away any moment, she could risk feeling happy in it—and the more tolerant of things outside it. The world looked altogether a different place when you knew that you had only to close your eyes at night to come alive as your true self in Arcady.

And, why, she wondered, could real life not be like that? Or perhaps for some people it was—sometimes, and in glimpses . . .

There had been that wonderful night when they had gone along the green path which led up the little hill to the pavilion. She had been excited, happy, a little tremulous. They had lain on cushions, looking out between the square oak pillars while the sun sank smoky red, and the thin banks of cloud lost its tinge to become dark lines across a sky that had turned almost green. All the sounds had been soft. A faint susurring of insects, the constant whisper of leaves, and, faraway, a nightingale singing. . . . His muscles were firm and brave; she was soft as a sun-warmed peach.

Does a rose, she wondered, feel like this when it is about to open. . . ?

And then she had rested content, looking up at the stars, listening to the nightingale still singing, and to all nature gently breathing.

In the morning, when her eyes were open to her familiar small room and her ears to the sound of traffic in the street below, she lay for a while in happy lassitude. It was then that she had decided to write the book—not, at first, for others to read, but for herself, so that she would never forget.

Unashamedly it was a sentimental book—one such as she had never thought herself capable of writing. But she enjoyed writing it, and re-living in it. And then it had occurred to her that perhaps she was not the only person who was tired of carrying a tough, unsentimental carapace. So she produced a second version of the book, somewhat pruned—though not quite enough, apparently, for the publisher's taste—and added an ending of her own invention.

And here, now, was the inexplicable result.

THE first pressure of Leila Mortridge's flood of tears had subsided. She was dabbing now, and giving little sniffs.

With the air of one accepting the necessity of somebody being

practical, Jane said:

"It seems to me it's quite clear that one of two things has happened: either there's some kind of telepathy between us—and I don't see that that fits very well—or we are both having the same dream."

Mrs. Mortridge sniffed again. "That's impossible," she said, decidedly.

"The whole situation's impossible," Jane told her shortly. "But it's happened—and we have to find the least impossible explanation. Anyway, is two people having the same dream so much more unlikely than anybody having a dream which goes on like a serial?"

Mrs. Mortridge dabbed, and regarded her thoughtfully. "I don't see," she said, a trifle primly, "how an unmarried girl like you could be having a dream like that at all."

Jane stared. "Come off it," she advised, briefly. "Besides . . . it seems to me every bit as unsuitable for a respectably married woman."

Mrs. Mortridge looked forlorn. "It's ruined my marriage."

Jane nodded understandingly. "I was engaged—and it wrecked that. How could one? I mean, after—" She let the sentence trail away.

"Quite," said Mrs. Mortridge.

They fell into abstract contemplation for some long moments.



Mrs. Mortridge broke the silence to say:

"And now you're spoiling it, too."

"Spoiling your marriage?" said Jane, amazedly.

"No, spoiling the dream."

Jane said, firmly, "Now, don't let's be silly about this! We're both in the same boat. Do you think I want you muscling in on my dream?"

"My dream."

Jane disregarded that, and thought for a while.

"Perhaps it won't make all that difference," she suggested at last. "After all, if we were both dreaming we were her and didn't know anything about one another then, why shouldn't we go on without knowing anything about one another?"

"But we do—"

"Not when we're there. At least, I don't think we will. If that's so, it won't really matter, will it? at least, perhaps it won't . . .

Mrs. Mortridge looked unconsoled. "It'll m-matter when I wake up and know you've b-been sharing—" she mumbled, tearfully.

"Do you think I like the idea of that any more than you do?" Jane said, coldly.

It took her a further twenty minutes to get rid of her visitor. Only then did she feel at liberty to sit down and have a good cry about it all.

THE dream did not stop, as Jane had half-feared it might. Neither was it spoiled. Only for a few succeeding mornings was Jane troubled on waking by the thought that Leila Mortridge must be aware of every detail of the night's experiences—and though there should have been some compensation to be found in the fact that she was equally aware of what had happened to Leila Mortridge, it did not, for some reason, seem to work quite that way.

The experiences of the girl in the dream were in no way lessened for either of them by their knowledge of one another. They established that over the telephone the following morning, with a thankfulness which was almost uniability. With that settled, the besetting fear lost something of its edge, and antagonism began to dwindle. Indeed, so thoroughly did it decline that the end of a month saw it replaced by a certain air of sorority, expressed largely in telephone calls that were almost schoolgirlish in manner if not in content.

For after all, Jane said to herself, if a secret had to be shared, why not make the best of the sharing?

It was on an evening some three months after their first meeting that Leila Mortridge telephoned with an unusual, almost panicky note in her voice:

"My dear," she demanded, "Have you seen this evening's *Gazette*?"

Jane said that she had just glanced at it.

"If you have it there, look at page four. It's in Theater Chat. The thing in the second column, headed 'Dual Role'—"

Jane laid down the receiver. She found the newspaper and the paragraph:

DUAL ROLE

The production due to open shortly at the Countess Theater is described as a romantic play with music. In it, Miss Rosalie Marhank will have the unique distinction of being both the Leading Lady and the Authoress. This work, which is her first venture into authorship, is, she explains, neither a musical comedy nor a miniature opera, but a play with music that has been specially composed by Alan Cleat. It is the rustic love story of a girl lace-maker. . . .

JANE read on to the end of the paragraph and sat quite still, clutching the paper. A tiny chattering from the neglected telephone recalled her. She picked it up.

"You've read it?" Leila Mortridge's voice inquired.

"Yes," said Jane, slowly. "Yes . . . I—you don't happen to know her, do you?"

"I don't remember ever hearing of her. But it looks—well, I mean, what else can it be?"

"It *must* be." Jane thought for a moment. Then: "All right. We'll find out. I'll push our critic into wrangling us a couple of seats for the first night. Will you be free?"

"I'm certainly going to be."

THIS dream went on. That night there was some kind of fair in the village. Her little stall looked lovely. Her lace was as delicate as if large snowflake patterns had been spun from the finest spider-thread. It was true that nobody was buying, but that did not seem to matter.

When he came, he found her sitting on the ground beside the stall, telling stories to two adorable, wide-eyed children. Later on, they closed up the stall. She hung her hat over her arm by its ribbons, and they danced.

When the moon came up, they drifted away from the crowd. On a little rise they turned and looked back at the bonfire and the flares and the people still dancing—then they went away along a path through the woods, and forgot all about everything and everybody but each other.

ONE of the reasons why Jane was able to get her tickets with no great difficulty was the clash of the opening night of "Idyll" with that of a better publicized and more ambitious production. As a result, few of the regular first-night ornaments were to be seen, and the critics were second-flight. Nevertheless, the house was full.

She and Leila Morridge found their seats a few minutes before the lights were lowered. The orchestra began an overture of some light, pretty music, but she could pay little attention to it for her empty, sick feeling of excitement.

She put out an unsteady hand. Leila's grasped it, and she could feel that it, too, was trembling. She found herself wishing very much that she had not come, and guessed that Leila was feeling the same. But they had had to come; it would have been still worse not to.

The orchestra weaved its way from one simple, happy tune to another, and finished. There were five seconds of expectancy, and then the curtain rose.

A sound that was half-sigh and half-gasp rustled through the theater and shrank into a velvet silence.

A girl lay on a green bank set with starlike flowers. She wore a simple dress of white, patterned with small flowers and amorets.

Her bare feet dabbled in the edge of a pool.

Somewhere in the audience a woman gave a giggling sob, and was hushed.

The girl on the bank stirred in lazy bliss. She raised her head and looked beyond the bank. She smiled, and then lowered her head, lying as if asleep, with a tress of hair across her cheek.

There was no sound from the audience. It seemed not to breathe. A clarinet in the orchestra began a plaintive little theme. Every eye in the house left the girl, and dwelt upon the other side of the stage.

A man in a green shirt and russet trousers came out of the bushes. He was carrying a bunch of flowers and treading softly.

At the sight of him a sigh, as of huge, composite relief, breathed through the house. Jane's hand relaxed its unconscious pressure upon Leila's.

He was not the man.

HE approached the girl on the bank, bent over, looking down on her for a moment, then gently laid the flowers on her breast. He sat down beside her, leaning over on one elbow to gaze into her face . . .

It was at that moment that something impelled Jane to take her attention from the stage. Her head turned slowly, as if at a half-heard whisper . . . her eyes rost.

She gasped. Her heart gave a jump that was physically painful. She clutched Leila's arm.

"Look!" she whispered. "*In that box up there!*"

There could not be a moment's doubt. She knew the face better than she knew her own: every curl of his hair, every plane of his features, every lash around the brown eyes. She knew the tender smile with which he was leaning forward to watch the stage—knew it so well that she ached. She knew—everything about him.

Then, suddenly, she was aware that the eyes of almost every woman in the audience had left the stage and were turned the same way as her own.

The hungry expressions on the rows of faces made her shiver and hold more tightly to Leila's arm.

For some minutes the man continued to watch, appearing oblivious of anything but the lighted scene. Then something—perhaps the intense stillness of the audience—caused him to turn his head.

Before the hundreds of upturned eyes, his smile faded into concern.

Abruptly the silence was broken by hysterics, in a dozen different parts of the house at once.

He stood up uncertainly, his expression of concern becoming tinged with alarm. Then he turned toward the back of the box. What happened there was invisible

from the floor, but in a moment he came into view again, backing away from the door toward the rail of the box. Beyond him the heads of several women came into sight. The look on their faces caused Jane to shudder again.

The man turned, and she could see that his expression was now definitely one of fear. He was cornered, and the women came on toward him like passionate furies.

With a merely momentary hesitation, he swung one leg over the rail of the box, and clambered outside. Quite evidently he intended to escape by climbing to the neighboring box—with a foot on one of the light brackets, he reached for its edge. Simultaneously, two of the women in the box he was leaving clutched at his other arm—and broke his hold upon the rail.

For a fearful prolonged moment he teetered there, arms waving to regain his balance. Then he fell, arching backward, and crashed headfirst into the aisle below.

Jane clutched Leila to her, and bit her lip to keep from screaming. She need not have made the effort: practically everyone else screamed.

BACK in her own room, Jane sat looking at the telephone for a long time before she could bring herself to use it. At last she lifted the receiver, and got through

to the office. She gave a desk number.

Then:

"Oh, Don. It's about that man at the Countess Theater tonight. Do you know anything?" Her voice was a flat, dead sound.

"Sure. Just doing the obit now," Don said cheerfully. "What do you want to know?"

"Just—oh, just who he was—and things."

"Fellow called Desomond Halcy. Age 35. Quite a show of letters after his name, medical mostly. Practiced as a psychiatrist. Seems to have written quite a flock of things. Best known is a standard work: *Crowd Psychology and the Communication of Hysteria*. Latest listed publication is a paper which appears to be generally considered pretty high-flown bunk, called *The Inducement of Collec-*

tive Hallucination. He lived at—hello, hello? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Jane told him, leveling her voice with an effort.

"Thought you sounded—say, you didn't know him or anything, did you?"

"No," said Jane, as steadily as she could. "No, I didn't know him."

Very precisely she returned the telephone to its rest. Very carefully she walked into the next room. Very deliberately and sadly she dropped on her bed, and let the tears flow as they would.

And who shall say how many tears flowed upon how many pillows for the dream that did not come that night nor ever again?



PREDICTION

Mount Olympus, complete with major and minor deities, comes to the U.S.A. in the next issue's novella, THE GOD BUSINESS by Philip José Farmer—and this is to notify you that business is anything but usual! For cockeyed incident, screwball symbolism and piston-powered story tension, it's a completely modern challenge to Alice in Wonderland. The ancient Nature-worshippers couldn't contend with the majestic rages and cosmic pranks of their Olympian masters . . . but they didn't have our highly advanced technology!

Besides numerous short stories, there will be at least one novelet—GONE WITCH by Curt Sturm. It's a devilish job, but with enchanting charm!



By WILLIAM MORRISON

g'rilla

Something in the bathroom was eating toothpaste!

RHODA had no trouble telling light from dark in spite of the weakness of her eyes. She knew at once when she opened them that it was still what her Mommie and Daddie would have called the middle of the night. That is, it was an hour before the alarm clock would go off and wake them up. And Rhoda had to go to the bathroom.

She swung her feet over the side of the bed, knocking to the floor,

which was already carpeted with her playmates, another of her numerous dolls. Fortunately, it was a soft doll and it landed silently, without the heavy thump that might have awakened Georgie. Georgie was only three, and once he got up Daddie and Mommie might as well get up, too, because Georgie didn't believe in letting people waste their lives sleeping. Georgie also didn't believe in bathrooms, Rhoda thought smugly. At



beast he didn't believe in them much.

She padded silently toward the door without bothering to find her slippers. The hallway was very black, but she knew the way and didn't slow up until she reached the bathroom. There, at the door, she stopped.

Someone was up. The light wasn't on, but the water was running and she knew that Mommie and Daddie never left it running

Illustrated by KOSSIN

when they went to bed. One of them was in there.

She pushed open the door and called softly, "Mommie?"

The water stopped running. No one was there.

That's funny, she thought. I musta been 'magining things. I musta been dreaming—can you dream when you're awake? I'll have to ask Mommie.

She was still musing when she padded back to her own room, taking care not to trip over the dolls and fuzzy animals on the floor. As she was falling asleep, she thought she heard the water running again. 'Magination, she thought, drowsily. *Mommie says I got a good 'magination.*

WHEN the alarm clock went off, she felt too sleepy to get up. So did her Mommie and Daddie, but being big people, they got up anyway.

As it happened, the alarm clock had also awakened Georgie and Georgie was better than any mechanical invention when it came to making sure that nobody fell asleep again. He went whooping around the house, first as an Indian and then as a cowboy, and by the time he had shot his fifth rustler, nobody was sleepy any more. So Rhoda got up and brushed her teeth. She noticed that the walls around the washbowls were all wet, as if from a shower.

When she ran into the kitchen, Mommie was already cooking breakfast. Mommie was tired, and when she smiled at Rhoda, it was almost as if she didn't mean it. As if there was no reason to smile and it was painful to do so. Rhoda wondered why she acted that way. It seemed to her that most Mommies and Daddies did silly things, but that lately her own Mommie had taken to doing even worse things than the rest.

She would start crying for no reason at all and even when all those wonderful presents started coming in—presents from people Rhoda didn't even know—she didn't get any happier. And when Rhoda had a birthday party and a Thanksgiving party and a Christmas party one right after the other, long before she had expected them, her Mommie didn't enjoy the parties at all. It was as if everything that she and everybody else did to make Rhoda happy only made her sad.

Rhoda found all this hard to understand and after awhile she stopped trying. Just as she stopped trying to understand why the world seemed to get just a little darker and a little fuzzier each day, and why all the lovely dolls and animals and games that she received didn't look quite as nice and colorful and pretty as they once did. And why she couldn't go to the movies any more, to sit screaming

with joy as she watched the Westerns on Saturdays. She was only seven, and these were mysteries that one had to be grown up to understand. And big people wouldn't or couldn't explain to her. Not even the doctor, who was supposed to know everything and didn't know how to stop her Mommie from crying when he examined Rhoda.

Mommie said, "Did you sleep well, dear?"

"Oh, yes, I slept very well. Only I had to get up to go to the bathroom. Mommie, can a person dream when she's awake, can she, Mommie?"

"Sometimes. Did you have a dream?"

"I don't know. I thought I was awake, but now I'm not sure."

"What did you dream, dear? Was it nice?"

"It wasn't much. I thought I heard the water runnin' in the bathroom. But when I went in, it wasn't."

DADDIE had come in and heard her. "You might have turned the water on yourself," he said. "Someone has been squirting it around."

"It might have been Georgie," said Mommie.

"Oh, no; he was asleep when I got up," Rhoda stated firmly. "Georgie doesn't like to get up to go to the bathroom."

Daddie said thoughtfully, "You might have turned the water on yourself anyway. You know, Rhoda, sometimes people walk in their sleep and don't realize what they're doing. They think they're awake when they're just acting out their dreams."

"How can you tell when you're awake or dreaming?"

"That's a difficult question, Rhoda. There are times when you can't tell."

"I wish all this were a dream," said Mommie huskily. "I wish I could just wake up—" And then she saw the way Daddie was looking at her and she stopped.

Very silly, thought Rhoda. Why should anyone want to be in a dream? Dreams could be terrifying. Once, long ago, after listening to fairy tales, she had dreamed of giants and ogres and dragons, and she had been horribly frightened. But you didn't see giants and ogres and dragons when you were awake. Just their pictures in the story books and you knew they weren't real. Not really real.

Rhoda ate a good breakfast, and Georgie half-ate his and half-washed his face in it as usual. Daddie, also as usual, gobbleted his toast in a hurry, plunked down his empty coffee cup and ran off to work, while Mommie, who had no appetite, just drank a cup of coffee—terrible-tasting stuff—with-out sugar or anything sweet, that

Rhoda had once sipped and disliked very much. Rhoda wondered whether she would have to drink coffee when she grew up.

She asked her Mommie.

"You'll drink whatever you please when you grow up, dear."

"You know, Mommie, when I grow up I'm gonna be a cowgirl. Also a actress. Can I be both?"

"Yes, dear. You can be anything you want."

"And I'm gonna be a lady doctor and a nurse and a fire-engine driver and a spaceship pilot and . . ." She paused to think of all the other things she wanted to be.

"When you grow up," said Mommie dully and seemed to choke. She turned her face away.

That's silly, too, thought Rhoda. What's she crying about now?

FORTUNATELY, her Mommie had a lot of things to do around the house, and that kept her busy and gave her less time to cry. And Rhoda went back to her bedroom and began to straighten up her dolls and fuzzy animals.

One of her dolls, the very big one she had decided to call Lillian Marilyn, had a dirty face. Even Rheda could see that there was a big smudge across her nose and cheeks. And as Lillian Marilyn had a washable skin, Rhoda decided that she might as well give her child a bath. She tucked the big doll daintily into her carriage

and wheeled the carriage out into the hall toward the bathroom.

When she reached the bathroom door, she could hear the water running again.

She came to a stop. Not only was the water running—somebody was running, too. Rhoda could hear the sounds as if a cat were scampering all around, up the walls and over the shower fixtures and then up to the laundry dryer. With the water running.

She pushed open the door.

All she could see was the quick flash of a shadow. And then that disappeared and the bathroom was quiet again except for the cold water faucet, which gurgled calmly.

Water was splashed over everything. There were puddles on the floor and streaks on the walls. And on the sink lay an uncapped tube of toothpaste, half empty. The new green toothpaste with the pretty chlorophyll.

"My, my!" said Rhoda. "This is a mess!" She bent over the bathtub and turned on both the hot water and the cold. As the tub began to fill, she started to undress Lillian Marilyn. She left the clothes in the carriage and wrapped Lillian Marilyn in her own towel. The water in the tub was a little too cool, so she turned off the cold water faucet and let the hot run for a little while longer. It wouldn't do for Lillian Marilyn to catch cold.

After the doll had been bathed and dried, Georgie came into the bedroom to watch her being dressed. He wanted her to wear a cowboy suit, but Rhoda thought Lillian Marilyn was too young for that. She dressed the doll in a nurse's uniform instead.

Georgie said, "I'm a hunner. Bang, bang!"

"What are you hunting, Georgie?"

"I'm hunnin' g'rilas. I saw a g'illa inna bathroom before."

"How could a gorilla get in the bathroom?"

"Mommie put 'im there."

"That's silly, Georgie. Mommie wouldn't do that. You got a 'magination that's even worse'n mine."

"I ain't got a 'magination. He was there."

"Don't lie, Georgie. Not in front of Lillian Marilyn. I don't want her to catch any bad habits."

JUST then Mommie came in and asked, "Rhoda, did you give Lillian Marilyn a bath?"

"Yes, Mommie, she was filthy. She always plays on the floor, so I had to get the dirt offa her. And I washed her hair with shampoo."

"Well, next time, dear, please try not to splash water all over the bathroom floor."

"I didn't splash water, Mommie. It was wet. The shadow splashed it."

"The shadow?"

"He was lettin' the water run. And usin' the green toothpaste."

"It was a g'illa," put in Georgie. "A great big g'illa, this big." And he stretched his hands about two feet apart.

"Gorillas are bigger'n that," said Rhoda. "Maybe it was a monkey."

"It was a g'illa," maintained Georgie stubbornly. "I saw 'im. He was splashin' water an' eatin' too-paste."

"Whatever it was," said Mommie, and for the first time in weeks she seemed to be smiling without trying too hard, "tell him to be neat. I don't want any gorillas making a mess of my bathroom."

"I'll tell 'im, Mommie," said Georgie.

But of course, thought Rhoda, Georgie wouldn't tell him. Georgie always forgot Mommie's instructions. It was up to Rhoda to tell him.

She had her chance the next morning, again about an hour before the alarm clock went off. Rhoda awoke as she had done the day before, got out of bed and padded on bare feet toward the bathroom.

She could hear the water running again. Was she asleep and dreaming or was she really awake? It was a little hard to tell, she thought doubtfully. But if the water stopped running before she came

in, she guessed she was prob'ly asleep. Things sometimes happened awfully fast when you dreamed. When you were awake, they sort of took their time more.

The water didn't stop running. She pushed open the door and there was a sudden whoosh as a shadow swept right past her face. And then the shadow was scampering around the bathroom, up and down and side to side, from laundry hamper to dryer to shower fixtures and back again, so fast that her blurred eyes couldn't keep up with it.

It was not a gorilla, she thought triumphantly. It was too small to be a gorilla. 'Course it was moving too fast for her to see what it was, but when it stopped . . .

It stopped in the opposite upper corner of the bathroom. There was nothing there to hold onto that Rhoda knew about, but the thing was holding on anyway, seemingly in no danger of falling. Bright flashes of light came from its eyes.

Rhoda thought, *It's lookin' at me just like I'm lookin' at it. Only I can't see so good any more and I can't tell just what it's like. I'll bet it's a monkey. I don't know how a monkey could have got in here, 'cause the bathroom window is closed. But it ain't a gorilla so it must be a monkey.*

I wonder what it's doin' up there in the corner. Gotta ask Mommie and Daddie. Maybe they know.

SHE slipped out of the bathroom and down the hall to Mommie's and Daddie's bedroom. The room was quiet. All she could hear was the sound of her Daddie's rhythmic breathing.

She put her hand to his shoulder. "Daddie," she whispered in the clear and piercing whisper of a child.

He spoke into his pillow without opening his eyes. "What'sa matter?"

"It ain't a gorilla. I think it's a monkey. Please come and see."

"Go away, Rhoda. Let me sleep."

"All right, Daddie. But he's makin' a mess outta the bathroom again."

"Tell him cut it out."

He turned away from her and Rhoda thought with exasperation that grownups were always so sleepy and made such a big fuss about being awakened. Not like children, who didn't like to waste their time sleeping. Take Georgie, now—once you got him up he'd never go back to sleep. There was so much to do.

Her face brightened. Why not take Georgie? He could see better than she could and tell her what the monkey was doing.

She hurried back to her own room and whispered, "Georgie!"

Georgie just turned away from her in his sleep and tried to dig his face into the wall.

She began to shake him. "George, wake up! You wanna see the gorilla?"

"Don' wanna see nuthin'."

"It's the gorilla in the bathroom. Only it ain't a gorilla, it's a monkey. You wanna play with 'im?"

That did it. George sat up, rubbed his knuckles into his eyes and was awake. There was no danger that he'd go back to sleep again.

She led him into the bathroom. The shadow wasn't in the corner any longer. It was in the clothes dryer. And it was making noises. Funny noises.

George's eyes brightened up. "Grilla," he said.

"Silly, it ain't big enough for a gorilla. What's it doin' up there?"

"Eatin' too'paste," said George. "An' talkin'. He got his face all messed up."

"Oh, dear," said Rhoda. She could see now, as the daylight filtering through the window grew stronger, that there were green streaks around the bowl. "He messed up the sink, too." She faced the shadow. "You cut that out, do you bear? You stop messin' this place up."

"He eats wif bofe moufs," said George. "An' talks wif bofe."

"Both mouths? You mean he's got two of them? Oh, no!"

"He is so," insisted George stubbornly. "First he puts it in one

mouf an' talks wif udder mouf. Then he puts it in udder mouf an' talks wif first."

"But a monkey has only one mouth."

"This a grilla. Got two moufs."

"And what else has he got, George?"

"Lots an' lotsa feet. Zillionsa feet."

"You don't even know what a zillion is. You can't count over five."

"I can so. He's holdin' dryer wif free feet an' eatin' too'paste wif free more. An' he gotta lotta feet up in air. He got zillionsa feet."

THE shadow seemed to grow tired of the dryer and suddenly began to flash around the bathroom again. A squeezed-out tube of toothpaste fell to the floor. Rhoda, guided by the sound, picked it up. She noticed as she did so that there were puddles of water on the floor again.

She put the tube back on the sink and watched the shadow. It was still making funny noises. It made a sudden leap from the shower curtain right into the middle of the room and then . . .

Rhoda blinked. There were no more funny noises. And the shadow was gone. It had leaped right into the air and disappeared.

"I wan' 'im back!" said George loudly.

"But where did he go?"

"He wen' away. I wan' 'im back, I wan' 'im back!"

And then, quite suddenly, as was Georgie's way, he began to bawl and scream. "I wan' my g'rilla!"

The bathroom door opened. Daddie stood there, looking mad. "What's the reason for making an unholy racket at this hour in the morning?"

"Oh, Daddie, Georgie's bein' silly. He says he wants his gorilla back, but it ain't a gorilla. It's only a monkey. And it ain't his. I don't know who it belongs to."

"I wan' 'im back!" screamed Georgie.

"Stop that, Georgie," said Rhoda, "before Daddie gets really angry."

"You're a little too late for that, my fine-frenzied son. But you'd better stop that screaming anyway." He looked around the bathroom. "What have you been doing in this place—making rain? The floor looks as if a flood had hit it."

"It wasn't us, Daddie. It was the monkey. He was splashin' water and eatin' toothpaste. At least Georgie says he was."

"Wif bofe mousf," added Georgie. "An' talkin' wif bofe."

Daddie looked angrier and angrier. "I don't know what kind of game you children have been playing. But I don't want you messing up the bathroom—or making a

racket this early in the morning."

"I told the monkey not to mess the place up, Daddie, only I don't think he understood me. He talked funny."

"Never mind this imaginary monkey. Just you two behave. Now I'm going back to bed to catch a few more winks—"

The alarm rang. Loud and clear.

"My mistake. All right, I'll have to stay up now. But in the future—no monkey business before the alarm clock goes off."

During the day, Georgie was an awful nuisance. Rhoda offered him her teddy bear and her big panda and her middle-sized panda and her rabbit and her giraffe—but Georgie rejected them all. They weren't alive and he wanted an animal that was—his g'rilla. And nothing that Rhoda could say succeeded in convincing him that the g'rilla wasn't really his. A remarkably stubborn child, Georgie, as Mommie had once said in Rhoda's hearing.

IN the afternoon, Mommie took Rhoda to the doctor again and he gave her the usual examination, shining lights in her eyes, and staring deep into them. When he was through, Mommie said something to him in a half whisper that Rhoda couldn't hear.

He shook his head. "No, it isn't affected. Not that way. Only the nerves leading from the retina."

"But she imagines the most peculiar things, Doctor. She said something about seeing a monkey in the bathroom. She even convinced her little brother, Georgie."

"Georgie thinks it's a gorilla," Rhoda explained. "And he says it has two mouths and a zillion feet. Georgie is a baby. He don't know what he sees."

"You know, don't you, Rhoda?" said the doctor.

"I know when I see it good. But I couldn't see this as good as Georgie can. It was kinda shadowy."

"Really?"

"And it jumped in the air an' banished."

"Vanished, dear."

"Vanished, Mommie. Only it didn't have any zillion feet. Georgie is a liar."

"No, I wouldn't say that. He just has a lively imagination—as most young children do," said the doctor. "It's nothing to worry about."

Nothing to worry about, thought Rhoda. He wouldn't have said so if he had to put up with Georgie the rest of that day. Georgie didn't forget his g'rilla for a moment and finally Rhoda had to shut him in a closet behind a row of dresses. There he screamed even louder than ever, but in a muffled way, until Mommie found out what was going on and released him.

At night, before he fell asleep,

he again demanded the g'rilla. And the next morning, when Rhoda went to the bathroom and heard the water running, as she had expected, she was annoyed to find that Georgie had awakened, too, and was tagging along.

But he didn't make any racket this time. Because the shadow was there, racing around the bathroom as before and making its funny noises, and Georgie was too pleased to scream. At first, anyway.

The shadow came to rest on the side of the wall.

"I wanna pet 'im," said Georgie. "I wanna make nice. Tell 'im to come 'ere."

"He won't do what I tell him. But I got a idea, Georgie. You saw him eatin' that toothpaste?"

"Wif bole moufs."

"He must like it an awful lot. I know where Mommie put some extra toothpaste she bought. Maybe if I give it to him, he'll come down to us."

SHE had to climb up on a chair to get the toothpaste from the shelf, where Mommie had put it, but she found it at last and brought it into the bathroom—two tubes of it.

"Here, Georgie, you give it to him."

Georgie held out his hand with the toothpaste. The shadow scampered over the ceiling, then swoop-

ed down, grabbed the tube, and was up on the clothes dryer the next moment, twisting the cap off.

The cap fell to the floor. Five seconds later, the tube itself landed with a slight crash.

"He don't want it," said Rhoda in amazement. She picked up the tube. "Oh, it ain't the green kind. Here, Georgie, give him the other tube. Maybe he'll like that."

The other tube was snatched up, the cap removed.

"He's eatin' it," said Georgie. "He likes this kin'."

"He better not eat it all. We ain't got too much toothpaste left."

"He didn't lemme pet 'im. Tell 'im to lemme, Rhoda."

"He can't understand us, silly. He's only an animal. He talks animal talk."

"G'rilla," said Georgie.

"Maybe if I give him another animal . . ."

Rhoda slipped quietly back to her room and selected a small rabbit. A pretty fuzzy rabbit that was one of Georgie's favorites.

She hurried back into the bathroom, banging her arm against the wall in her eagerness. The shadow was still up near the ceiling, but when she held out the fuzzy rabbit, it descended a trifle as if to examine her offer.

"I wanna give it!" cried Georgie.

She let him take the rabbit and hold it out in his chubby little

hand. The shadow descended a few inches more.

"He's afraid," said Georgie. "Here, g'rilla. Here, g'rilla . . ."

The shadow swooped and snatched. The rabbit seemed to leap up into the air.

"He didn't lemme pet 'im," said Georgie, his face puckering. "I wanna—"

Rhoda put her hand over his mouth just in time. "Don't you remember what Daddie said? You mustn't wake him."

Georgie was trying to get a squawk out, but nothing got past Rhoda's palm except a muffled, "Muuuuuuu." So he tried to bite her hand.

Rhoda promptly kicked him.

At that moment the alarm clock went off and Rhoda took her hand away.

"Now you kin scream, Georgie," she told him. "Scream all you wanna."

Georgie at once availed himself of the privilege and loosed a poignant ear-shattering yell that drowned out the still-ringing alarm clock. The shadow leaped past Rhoda as if startled and disappeared from view. And the rabbit disappeared with it.

Through half-closed eyes, in the midst of his tantrum, the screaming boy realized that he was now also bereft of his rabbit. Rage pumped additional power into the already piercing shriek.

THE door was torn open and Daddie said, "What the hell!"

Rhoda was shocked. "Oh, Daddie, what you said!"

"Never mind what I said. What's going on here?"

"Da g'rilla stole my fuzzy wabbit!" yelled Georgie. "He stole my wabbit an' he didn't lemme pet 'im!"

"It wasn't a gorilla, silly. It was a monkey."

"What kind of nonsense is this? Are you kids still pretending there's a monkey around here?"

Mommie came hurrying up. Georgie yelled, "Mommie, da g'rilla stole my wabbit!"

"I thought they were through pretending about a gorilla or a monkey or whatever it is. What's behind all this, anyway?"

"I suppose, dear, they have to have some excuse for messing up the bathroom," Mommie said.

"It wasn't us, it was the monkey," said Rhoda.

"I know, darling."

"He took my wabbit."

"Now, look here . . ."

"Oh, never mind, George. What difference does it make? How much longer do you suppose . . . How much-longer?"

Rhoda noticed to her surprise that Mommie seemed on the point of tears again. This was absolutely absurd. It was all right for Georgie to cry over a stolen rabbit, but a grownup like Mommie?

And Daddie, too, seemed to be upset. His voice got husky. "I suppose we ought to be thankful that she's interested—and imaginative—and happy—"

"I want my wabbit back!" insisted Georgie.

"Your rabbit must be lost somewhere among all those animals people sent Rhoda. I'll look for it after breakfast, Georgie."

"It ain't los'. Da g'rilla took it."

Georgie, as the entire family had noted by this time, was a remarkably stubborn child. He kept accusing the g'rilla all through the day. Daddie went to work early and missed some of his complaining, but Mommie and Rhoda had to stay at home and listen and after a time they got tired of it and Mommie told Georgie to keep quiet. But he wouldn't.

Finally Rhoda said, "You'll get your rabbit back tomorrow morning, Georgie. The monkey will bring it."

"That's right, dear," agreed Mommie. "And when he comes, I'll ask him for it myself. Maybe he'll even come tonight, when you and Georgie are asleep, and pay you another visit."

"Oh, no, Mommie, he never comes at night. Just in the morning. And I think he can't go very far outta the bathroom or he disappears like he was magic."

"We'll see," said Mommie, ending the conversation.

THAT evening after supper, Rhoda heard her talking about the monkey to Daddie. "She's created a set of rules for her imaginary monkey. About when it can appear and where."

"Well, when you create a world of your own, I suppose you have to create rules for it," said Daddie thoughtfully. "Primitive peoples did the same thing, and in many ways children are like their primitive ancestors. They find certain magic moments when unusual things can happen—high noon, midnight, sunset, dawn. With Rhoda, it's dawn. They have special magic places where their wonders occur. With Rhoda, it's the bathroom. They also prepare gifts and sacrifices to win the favor of their visitors from other worlds."

"A tube of toothpaste," laughed Mommie.

"Green toothpaste only. Chlorophyll, somehow symbolizing the plant world."

"Oh, George, the child has no idea of that!"

"Maybe she has an idea without knowing she has it. I'll bet she has beard all those ads about the magic of chlorophyll and believes them. And she has unconsciously used them in constructing this imaginary world of hers."

"Well, she has certainly sold George on it. He's a believer, too."

"It isn't hard to convince somebody who is even more primitive than you are," he said. "Now take the very appearance of that 'monkey'—"

"Ugh! You take it? It sounds horrible."

"It's supposed to have a lot of legs and two mouths. I suppose we'll never get a chance to check the description—" they both laughed—"but the very idea is absurd. Two mouths—and it eats with one while it talks with the other. Who ever heard of such a thing? It would take a child to think of it. And George is just the child for the job. After all, he isn't too sure where his own mouth is. He has been known to try to put a spoonful of food in his ear or his eye."

Rhoda interrupted, "I saw two mouths, too. When we got real close to us."

Daddie smiled. "Honest, Rhoda? But why does the monkey need both of them?"

Rhoda paused. "I know," she said suddenly. "Because sometimes he feels like laughin' and cryin' at the same time and it's hard to do with one mouth."

"That's a good reason," agreed Daddie, "but I won't believe it until he tells me himself. Meanwhile, Rhoda, suppose we quiet George by letting him play with one of your own fuzzy animals."

"It isn't fair to Rhoda!" Mommie protested.

"I don't mind, Mommie."

"Thank you, dear. You're a very generous child."

"A swell kid," said Daddie. "A wonderful kid. When I think . . ."

He stopped. Rhoda waited for him to say something more, but he didn't. He just put his arms around her and kissed her.

RHODA wondered what he had been going to say. She wished she were a grownup so she'd be able to read his mind, the way Mommie sometimes did, and was evidently doing now. Only reading people's minds didn't seem to make you happy. You seemed to read them best when they had sad thoughts and then you began to feel all sad and weepy yourself, the way Mommie was feeling.

Rhoda knew of nothing to be sad about. She couldn't see as well as she once did and sometimes she felt weak or had headaches, but so did everybody. From time to time she heard Mommie's neighbors complain of all sorts of terrible aches and pains and she pitied them.

But she had no reason to pity herself. None at all. Everybody was nice to her, people she didn't know sent her presents and Mommie and Daddie gave her parties long before everybody else had them. You might have thought they were trying to cram as much happiness as possible into her existence. And

she had the monkey in the bathroom, which nobody else seemed to have. True, she couldn't go to the movies. But despite that she led, she thought, a very interesting life.

That night, after Georgie was asleep and before she herself went to bed, it became even more interesting. She had neglected Lillian Marilyn during the day, and as she went to the carriage to kiss the doll good night, she saw . . .

She tiptoed out to tell Mommie and Daddie about it. Daddie laughed. "Imagination working overtime, Rhoda? Well, I'll take a look at your doll carriage."

He followed Rhoda into the bedroom, with Mommie close behind him. "Ah, there's the carriage. Now to see if the monkey really has two mouths."

He pulled back the top of the carriage and looked down. Then he choked. Rhoda heard him strangling and she caught a faint, "My God!"

He stepped back and stared at Mommie, who was also staring into the carriage as if she had turned to stone.

"What's the matter, Daddie?" asked Rhoda anxiously. "Don't he have two mouths?"

"Get back, Rhoda! Don't come close to it!"

"Why, Daddie? Does he got a disease?"

Daddie grabbed her and held

her too tight. "You take Georgie," he directed Mommie. "We'll get out of here and lock the door. We can't take any chances."

Sounds came from the doll carriage—sounds like those from a nursery in turmoil.

"Do you hear, Daddie?" cried Rhoda. "It's just like I told you. He's laughin' and cryin' at the same time! Guess he's excited," she added thoughtfully. "Guess the way big people look scared him."

THE shadow catapulted itself out of the carriage and began to scamper around the room. It leaped past Daddie, hopped on to Georgie's stomach—Mommie gave a cry of alarm at that—then began to race around the walls below the ceiling.

Georgie sat up. "Da g'rilla!" he cried. "I want my wabbit!"

"Hush, Georgie! Don't scare 'im like Daddie and Mommie did!"

The shadow reached the door and was through it in a flash. For a fraction of a second, they heard its excited shrieking and then—silence.

Daddie peered cautiously into the bathroom. "Not here," he said hoarsely. "It's gone."

"But suppose it comes back!" exclaimed Mommie.

"He won't come back," said Rhoda sadly. "You scared him. Poor monkey!"





Daddie and Mommie looked at each other. Mommie said tremulously and with a trace of acid, "I guess Rhoda does have a very powerful imagination."

"Now don't go overboard about what we saw," said Daddie. "We were excited at the idea of a strange animal in the children's bedroom. But actually—"

"It did have two mouths," said Mommie stubbornly. "I saw them. It was laughing out of one and crying out of the other. And it had a great many legs. And parts of it were dark and parts were shining like little jewels. Don't tell me I imagined all that! Don't tell me you didn't see it, too!"

Daddie started to say something and stopped. And at that moment Georgie uttered a great cry of triumph. "My wabbit! Da g'rilla bwrought back my wabbit!"

"He didn't take it away in the first place, you little silly," said Rhoda. "In the morning, when we weren't lookin', he must've run in here. And then he got tired and went to sleep in the doll carriage with Lillian Marilyn. I bet he was here all day." She said reproachfully, "You shouldn'ta scared him, Daddie."

"I'm sorry, Rhoda." Daddie managed a smile. "But I'm just as glad to be finished with him."

Rhoda had a feeling that they weren't finished with him at all.

In the morning, when she awoke

early as usual, the first thing she did was go to the doll carriage to see if possibly he had returned. But there was no sign of him. Lillian Marilyn lay alone, her eyes closed, her pink cheeks shining in the morning light. A little twisted, as if she had had a restless night, but otherwise quite normal.

Rhoda tried to straighten her out, but Lillian Marilyn wouldn't straighten. Putting her hand under the doll, Rhoda learned why.

Something yellow lay there in the carriage. The monkey must have left it behind him, forgotten in his excitement. It was yellow and shiny and strangely warm, and it felt as if in some curious way it were alive. As if it were really part of the monkey himself.

As she held it, it seemed to move under her hands—and then burst into dazzling brilliance.

When Rhoda could see again, it was as if through a veil—a yellow veil that spread between her and the room and made everything hazier than ever. A veil through which she could hardly be sure what she saw.

That wasn't a man in front of her. Even through the veil, she could see that he didn't quite look like a man. He was too big and he was colored a greenish-yellow and, like the monkey, he had two mouths. And he didn't seem to have any eyes at all. But he certainly seemed to see what

he was doing. He was looking at her—no, not at her, *through* her—and for a minute she was afraid of him.

He said something with one of his mouths, and Rhoda shook her head. "I'm sorry, Mr. Monkey's Daddie, I can't understand you. But we didn't want to scare your little boy and make him forget part of himself. Honest."

One of his mouths laughed and he picked her up. And somehow at the touch of his hands, without knowing why, she wasn't afraid any more.

He was talking to her again. Not with his mouths at all this time, but with the way he felt. And she could understand him. She could understand him perfectly. He felt like hugging her, which he did, and he felt like crying at the same time. He was glad he had her now and sorry he couldn't have her longer. He felt the way her Mommie and Daddie did sometimes when they looked at her and saw how happy she was about the presents people gave her and the gentle way the doctor spoke to her. As if it were something to cry about when everybody was so nice to her.

The man who wasn't a man said something very softly with the mouth that was supposed to cry. It was like the doctor saying, "This won't hurt now."

And it didn't. There was a

blinding flash of light and for a minute she couldn't see at all. And then the veil was gone and for the first time in ever so long, everything was clear.

The man was handsome and shiny, like the colored plastic toys she got, only much larger, of course, and very strong. And he was all beautiful colors, like electric lights on a Christmas tree, and he had the same kind of skin one of her dolls had, soft and warm and smooth—much better than human skin. And there was a place in back where she knew he could hook on wings whenever he wanted to.

Of course he wasn't a man, any more than the little one was a monkey—he looked like one of the things on a picture of an Indian totem pole that she had found in a gift book.

And now she could see where his eyes were. They were inside his head and they were very wise and kind.

HE put her down and spoke again—she couldn't see with which mouth—and it was only one word, but she knew what it meant. Some people might think it was just "Good-by," but it really meant much more than that. It meant "Good luck" and "God be with you" and "I love you very much" and "One day you will come and live with us" and a lot more.

Instead of blinking out of existence like the little one in the bathroom, he faded slowly, almost regretfully, looking back at her with the kind, wise eyes inside his head. She knew he would have eaten green toothpaste or anything else she gave him, but only because it would be a gift and he would want to make her happy. He seemed to like the kiss she threw him better than toothpaste or a toy rabbit.

And then he was gone.

For a while, she stood there, just looking around. She looked out the window and at Lillian Marilyn and at Georgie sleeping and at all her fuzzy animals. She just couldn't get tired of looking at things.

Then the alarm clock went off and she hurried to tell about her big friend.

Her Mommie and Daddie looked at each other.

"There was a man here?" Daddie asked, worried.

"A very nice man," said Rhoda, "except he wasn't really a man. He was all colors and he had his eyes inside his head." Without boasting, she added, "He loved me."

"He couldn't help loving you, dear," Mommie replied.

"He was nice. He made me see. Mommie, can I go to the movies this afternoon? I didn't go for such a long time."

"Rhoda, what's got into you?

You've been saying the strangest things!"

"Like what, Mommie?"

"That he made you see!"

"But he did. My vidgeon is perfect. I can see where the hem of your robe is unrabbling and where Daddie cut himself and I can see what a mess this room is. I'll help you clean it up, Mommie, if you let me go to the movies today."

There was a silence. Georgie came in and even he understood that something had happened that was more important than his newfound rabbit and, eyes round and missing nothing, he kept quiet.

And then Mommie said, "Does your head hurt, Rhoda dear?"

"Oh, no! I feel fine. Mommie, can I go to the movies if the doctor says it's all right?"

"We'll see what he says, dear. Are you *sure* you can see so clearly?"

"Course, Mommie. I can see out the window much better than I could yesterday. Look, there's a little bird in that tree and he's pulling a piece of paper out of his nest."

"Where?" asked Mommie. "I don't see that myself."

"I think," Daddie said hoarsely, "we'd better get her to the doctor right away."

BUT the doctor was silly. Even though he admitted there was nothing wrong with her eyes, he

still wouldn't let Rhoda go to the movies. He didn't understand it and he wanted other doctors to look at her and see if he'd somehow made a mistake and to make sure the recovery was permanent.

Mommie was still siller. She began to cry without being a bit sad. Even Daddie had tears in his eyes, although Daddies weren't supposed to cry. But knowing what the man who wasn't a man had said to her without talking, Rhoda understood how Daddie felt.

As for Rhoda, she herself was

sad for the first time. She could see better than anybody else—right through the wall and into the next room and a bird on the opposite side of a tree, as she had done that morning, and around corners and in the deepest dark. But that was something she had and it could be taken for granted.

She knew the monkey and his Daddie would never come back again.

William Morrison,

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The Man Who Got Around

By JOSEPH SATIN

*Professor Blennings was really
going places . . . but where? How? And why?*

HIS mind reached out to the opposite corner of the couch, then pulled at his body like a magnet . . .

Flick! His body zoomed across the couch. In the wink of an eye.

"Goodness gracious!" he whispered.

He panted a little and tentatively rubbed the armrest of the couch. The solid bulk of it comforted him and helped still the throbbing feeling in his mind. Strange, he thought, after a million trials and a million dreams of success, success itself seemed like another dream.

He folded his hands and looked

innocent as Martha Spencer came in from the kitchen.

"Dishes are all done," she said, smiling her shy, spinster's smile. "It hardly took any time at all. I hope you weren't too bored, sitting here in the living room all alone."

If you only knew, he thought shudderingly.

Aloof he said, "Er, ah—"

She blushed a little. "Would you care to go for a walk, Mr. Blennings?"

A WALK! After what he'd just done! He felt a surge of pitying contempt for Martha Spencer.

Illustrated by BARTH

These last few minutes had raised him to a new level, far superior to his old one—and to hers.

"I think I'll be leaving," he told her gruffly.

"Oh?" The hurt lay plain in her eyes.

"I—leaving for a walk with you, that is."

He shouldn't have melted like that; he should have rushed right home and experimented further with his new power. But at forty-three, he'd forgotten how to be reckless.

She was pleased. "Good. I'll go and freshen up a bit. Just be a minute."

He watched her go into the bedroom. She had, he suspected, a whopping good figure under those loose dresses she always wore. She probably wore them out of respect for his being a philosophy professor.

A lot she knew!

Alone once more, he wondered if he could get all the way across the living room to the chair in the corner. He reached out with his mind . . .

Flick!

He was there.

"Goodness," he said almost desperately. He felt himself sweating, and mopped his forehead with a pocket handkerchief. How far could he travel this way? The next room, the next floor, another building, another city?

The bedroom door opened like a dash of cold water. He blinked and lifted his pudgy, shortish frame out of the chair to greet Martha Spencer. She looked rather pretty tonight, he decided—except for her chin, which was a trifle too long.

"I'm ready, John," she said. It was the first time she had used his first name. After all, this was their sixth date. He didn't seem to mind. In fact, he didn't seem to notice.

"John," she reminded him gently.

"Er . . . Yes?"

"You agreed to take me walking, don't you remember?"

"Er—ah—"

SOMETHING was worrying him, Martha thought. She wished she could help, but knew she couldn't. In spite of their six dates he was still too out of reach, too locked within himself, the result of years spent only in reading dusty books and marking student papers. Maybe she should have worn a tighter dress . . .

Blessings cut short their walk and hastily said good night as soon as it was decently possible. Buses and even taxis were too confining tonight—he ran the necessary few blocks home.

Inside his house, he sat down in his favorite armchair and waited a few minutes while his trembling died down.

THEN, cautiously, his mind reached into the next room . . .

Flick! He was beside the dining room table.

His mind reached cautiously upstairs. He sweated at thinking he might crack his head open in transit . . .

Flick! He stood safe and happy in his bedroom. A face stared back at him from the mirror over his dresser, a pudgy, incredulous face.

"You and Plato," he gasped at it, putting Plato second. True, Plato first had the idea of teleportation—but he, John Blennings, had actually done it! And after all these years of trying!

He flicked back to the living room armchair and filled his pipe from the humidor alongside it. In the act of lighting it, he paused. He had to tell someone about this. The world had a right to know.

A reckless man would have zoomed right into the White House, or onto the stage of the Folies Bergere, and shouted his discovery to the world. But not John Blennings. He was too cautious for that. His entire life was governed by caution. Even his face was cautious, with wary, wide-open eyes that gave him a constant naive expression.

Whom could he tell? Not Martha Spencer, certainly . . . she was the nicest of all the women his colleagues had introduced him to, but now that he could teleport,

she was a little—well, inferior. It would be like a professor confiding in an instructor. It wouldn't do.

He decided to visit the faculty club. Perhaps some of the more important professors would be there; perhaps even the dean.

He stretched his mind to the far edge of town, to the hedges just outside the club's front door . . .

Flick! He opened the door and stepped inside. The club was lighted dimly tonight, and its massive, leather-covered mahogany furniture gave an added overtone of silence to the broad empty room.

JENKINS, the club's waiter and chief attendant, stepped in from the kitchen. "Good evening, Professor Blennings."

"Good evening, Jenkins. Where is everybody?"

"Why, it's Friday night, sir." If Jenkins thought the question a foolish one, his always imperturbable face didn't show it.

Professor Blennings hesitated. "Do you expect anyone in later?"

Jenkins shook his head. "Probably not, Professor. Most of the faculty like to spend weekends with the family. May I get you a snack, sir?"

"No, thank you, Jenkins." Blennings had a sudden impulse to teleport right out of there, just to see if Jenkins would change

expression—but caution overcame him, and he walked outside.

IN the darkened street, looking back at the outline of the faculty club, Blennings had a vision of all his colleagues comfortably at home with their families. It made him feel very lonely and sentimental.

Meanwhile, his problem was still unsolved. Whom could he tell about his wonderful gift? Perhaps someone from his own family. How about his brother, David? David lived in Chicago, a mere thousand miles away. Blennings liked him best of all his relatives, although he had never understood how David could have married that weird woman. Well, he'd try and talk to David alone. Let's see, it would be about nine o'clock in Chicago—not too late for a social call, especially since this was Friday night.

His mind reached out to David's living room . . .

Flick! David and his wife and youngest son were watching television. Blennings, slightly behind them, studied them for a moment. David's wife had gained weight again . . . ugh! Contemplating her, Blennings suddenly knew he couldn't tell David. David would tell her, and she'd offer him her priceless advice. He winced as he guessed what it might be. He prepared to leave. The child,

turning at that moment, saw him as . . .

Flick! He was back at home, smiling a little. The child wouldn't be believed, he was sure, when he said he'd seen "Uncle Blenny" there. David's wife would have some stupid psychoanalytic explanation for the child's story. David's wife was full of stupid, homemade psychoanalysis, stemming from a luncheon she'd once attended in honor of Anna Freud. She regularly sent Blennings long letters urging him to throw off his frustrations by running naked through the campus some evening during a football rally.

Whom could he tell?

"Diane Lyons." As soon as he said her name aloud, he realized that she was the only person with whom he could share this marvelous discovery. Diane Lyons. How long had it been . . . nineteen years? He shook his head, wondering at the passing of time. Let's see, it would be seven o'clock in Hollywood now—he'd probably catch her at dinner.

He started to reach his mind out toward California. And stopped. Teleporting was one thing; seeing Diane Lyons again was another. And Blennings was shackled with caution.

"I'll think it over for a day," he told himself, and sank back against his armchair.

But he couldn't sit still. His

discovery burned within him; he couldn't stop the throbbing of his mind. How far could he travel, he wondered—could he go all the way to Europe?

A yearning to see Scotland again made him half rise out of his chair. He'd gone there on his last sabbatical, and the brooding beauty of the place had been sweet and painful to behold. Scotland. It was very far. His mind reached out cautiously to the quaint Scottish town of Ayr . . .

Flick! He stood smoking his pipe on a cobblestone street between the old and new bridges of Ayr. Below, at his left, the Ayr River rustled through the emptiness of three o'clock in the morning. The streets were quite deserted, which suited Blennings perfectly. He listened to the water, to the squeaks of invisible animals, to the rustling of trees. Off in the distance, he saw the shadow of the Wallace Monument, its serrated tower etched against the sky. And in the sky, the frosty stars.

"Tomorrow I visit you," he promised them aloud, and shuddered from a feeling that was nameless, for it had never been felt before.

HE walked out of the town and far into the country, following the river. He remembered walking here six years before with

a paid guide, who had told him, "We've mony movie actresses visitin' here. There's Dione Lyons from Omerrica . . ."

He'd stayed at Ayr for three weeks, but he never saw her.

Diane Lyons. He'd been a young man then, a junior instructor engaged to his prettiest student, whose name at that time was Diane Behr—and who had preferred acting to Anaxagoras.

"It's stuffy here, Johnny," she kept telling him. "I'm going to New York and try for a break there."

He had been indignant. "Oh, come now, Diane, you know I'd never let you take a foolish chance like that."

She knew. And in the end, she left him and went off alone. In time the Behr became Lyons (she'd always had a sharp sense of humor) and Diane Lyons had skyrocketed far beyond the reach of Professor John Blennings, A.B., A.M., Ph.D.

He never forgot her. As his own years grew emptier, he escaped time and again into Diane's vigorous life. He followed her career intently, voyaged with her through three husbands and a series of good and bad movies, including even the awful one that presented her as a scantily dressed spiritual consultant to a tribe of Hottentots.

"Goodness gracious!" he said aloud, suddenly realizing what

must have spurred his longing tonight to revisit Ayr. It was Diane Lyons.

Dawn was beginning to gleam over Scotland. A cold mist ate into him, making him shiver a little. He yawned and stretched his mind back to his armchair . . .

Flick! It was not even midnight back home.

He felt tired, but knew he'd never sleep tonight. He took down a few books on the planets and reread them, concentrating especially on the pictures. From the trips he'd made so far, he knew that his mind reached out more surely toward an image that was definite.

He pulled out a worn copy of *Super Screen* from behind the complete works of Immanuel Kant. It contained photos of Diane Lyons, taken in her tennis court, her swimming pool, and on the balcony of her home, an authentic reproduction of a Venetian palace. With a thrill of joy, he realized that his teleporting brought him back to her level. In a sense he'd moved the clock back nineteen years.

"Goodness gracious," he observed.

Somewhat he managed to wait until evening, which would be afternoon in California, before going to Diane Lyons' house. Then he reached out with his mind for her tennis court . . .

FLICK! He was standing alone on the very spot where Diane had posed. He could see her house from where he stood—low, long, flat-roofed. As he approached the house, he remembered with the caution that never left him that he might be gone from home for several days and that he hadn't brought his toothbrush. And there were no stores here, as far as the eye could see.

Flick! Back in his own bathroom, he pocketed his toothbrush and, for good measure, an extra pair of socks . . .

Flick! He walked toward Diane Lyons' house. The front door was slightly open and Professor Blennings, not too nervous, walked in without ringing the doorbell. The afternoon sun shone on dark mahogany paneling and furniture, on infinitely colored crystal chandeliers. Blennings wandered through patches of sunlight and shadow, frowning a little.

"I really shouldn't be here," he murmured to himself. "She'll probably throw me out." He began to wonder if this teleporting wasn't affecting his mind, to enter Diane Lyons' home so boldly. Caution slowed him down, and he debated whether to leave.

"Hello," she said. "Don't I know you?"

He looked up and there she was, just as in technicolor, with her perfect brown eyes and her

hair the color of sunlit honey.

"Tim Professor—I mean, John Blennings." His voice quavered a little.

Her winsome mouth smiled a welcome. "Johnny, Johnny—can't place you," she said vaguely.

"Nineteen years ago. Clement University."

She snapped her fingers. "Oh, sure. Johnny. How are you?"

"Fairly well, except for a little touch of arthritis now and again."

He noted, with something of a shock, that there were hints of tiny wrinkles on her face—and her shoulders, bare above her crisp yellow dress, were soft with powder instead of the freshness of youth. "Heraclitus was right," he said suddenly. "Time passes along."

She looked surprised. "I guess it does. Look, I've got a full schedule this afternoon, Johnny. Nice seeing you again, but I've got to run along. Did you want anything special?"

"Er—sh—"

"No? Then I'll leave you with Miss Cooper."

She walked past him toward the front door, and Blennings noticed for the first time that another woman was in the room, a hard-faced woman in her fifties.

"Can I help you?" the woman asked in an almost masculine voice.

"N-no, thanks," Blennings stammered. "Just a social call."

"Would you like a photo of Miss Lyons, autographed?"

He guessed she was laughing at him. "Yes—er, no. I just dropped in to say hello."

He backed cautiously out of Diane Lyons' house, in time to see her driving away in a pale blue convertible. He should have gone home then, he knew—it would have been the wisest thing. But he'd seen her and actually talked to her. After nineteen years. And, after all, he could teleport.

Instead of going home, he reached with his mind for the second floor of her house . . .

Flick! Here in the upstairs quiet he found his way to the main bedroom and lay down on the blue and white counterpane covering Diane Lyons' immense bed. On the dressing table near his head, Diane's portrait smiled winsomely at him. Her skin was fresh and girlish in the picture, which was deceitful. Never mind, he thought drowsily; he still loved her. He closed his eyes. Just for a moment. After thirty hours without sleep, he was dog-tired.

SOMEONE was shaking him. "Come on, Johnny, get up. It's my turn in the bed."

He awoke and saw that it was night, and that Diane Lyons was bending over him. A tendril of hair curled round her neck as though it hated to let go of her.

"Darling," he said sleepily.
"You've come back."

She stepped back. "All right, Johnny," she snapped. "Up and out."

He sat up and rubbed his forehead until wakefulness returned. "Diane, you don't understand. I can teleport."

She picked up a bronze vase from the dressing table. "Johnny, I think you'd better go home and sober up."

He stood up. "Diane, let me explain. I can teleport. I can go anywhere in the world—in the Universe even—in a split second, and without moving my feet."

"I can touch my right elbow with my left hand," she said dryly.

He went toward her, then backed away as she raised the vase. "Diane," he pleaded, "I came here to tell you I can teleport. I have to tell somebody, and you're the only one. You see, I'm going to visit the planets now, and if anything happens to me—"

She put her hands on her hips. "Johnny, have you gone crazy? What have you been doing all these years that's done this to you?"

"I've been teaching philosophy," he said stiffly.

"Then what's with this teleport business? What kind of a word is that, anyway?"

"Teleport? It means to move or be carried great distances. It's a semi-scientific term, but the sci-

tists know nothing about it, really."

"But you do."

He nodded. "From philosophy, to be exact, from Plato. You see, Plato understood that all the material things in the world are just shadows of the real ones—that every table, for example, is just a different shadow of the one real table."

"So what?"

"Well, for many years I've been training my mind to think along those lines. I figured that a mind trained to grasp the real things behind all the shadows could rise above shadow movement—that is, ordinary movement—to real movement: to infinite speed at infinite distances."

SHE extracted a quart of gin from among the perfume bottles on her dressing table and poured herself a long drink.

"Why," she asked the ceiling, "do these things all happen to me?"

She finished her drink and shook her head at the gentle-faced little man standing opposite her. Had she really promised to marry him nineteen years ago? It didn't seem possible.

"Johnny," she said very gently, "will you please go home? I'm tired. It's been a rough day."

"Oh, hut you don't—"

She took his hand, sat down on the bed and motioned him to sit

beside her. His face changed color when she leaned toward him, as though he were going to have apoplexy.

She said, "Johnny, I guess you think what you did tonight was never done before—but it has. All kinds of people break in on actresses and promise them the moon. Why, one crackpot waited in my kitchen for two weeks while I was on vacation, and when I came home he told me he was a pop-up toaster. They took him away in a straitjacket."

He stood up. "But I can teleport," he urged her. "What can I do to convince you? . . . It'd be too risky to take you with me."

She raised the vase again. "With you where?"

"Oh, Mars or Venus—wherever I feel like stopping off first."

She should have called the police, she knew, but she felt sorry for the poor guy. A nut; but he'd come to her to have his crackup. And after all these years. It was touching.

She said, "Johnny, I'll make a deal with you. I'll let you teleport me. One time. If it works, I'll apologize. If it doesn't, will you promise me to go home?"

He thought it over. "All right—but I won't take you to a planet. I'll take you some place on Earth. That'll be less risky. Where would you like to go?"

"Anywhere?" she asked, smiling.

ing at how serious he looked.

"Anywhere."

"Let's drop into Lois Allenby's bedroom and scare the cold cream off that old hag."

"That seems like a waste of a gift like mine . . . Isn't there any place else you'd care to visit?"

She humored him. "Okay. Let's drop behind the Iron Curtain."

He surveyed her bare shoulders and thin yellow dress. "You'd better put a fur coat on first, then."

She got out one of her best minks and slipped it on without arguing. Better get this over with as soon as possible—if the gossips ever got hold of this story, Heaven help her.

"Ready," she told him.

HE put his arm around her, let his mind envelop her and reach toward an avenue in Stalingrad that he'd seen photos of. It was an ordinary avenue, full of stores and automobiles and snow.

Diane said, "Okay, Johnny, now suppose you—"

Flick!

"—go home," she finished, as a man hurrying by bumped into her and said "Proceeteet," which, although she didn't know it, was Russian for "Excuse me."

Professor Blennings looked around. It was the same street all right, but without the snow. They were in front of a large department store which seemed to have

nothing to sell and almost no window display. People kept hurrying by, still sleepy from the early morning hour, talking only occasionally.

The professor listened, entranced, to the meaningless Russian sounds.

Diane tugged at his sleeve. "Where are we?"

"Stalingrad," he told her nonchalantly.

"What!"

He took her hand. Despite the cold, it was still warm and good to touch. "Now do you believe I can teleport?"

She pinched herself. Nothing changed. "Yes," she said slowly, "I suppose I do. I owe you an apology."

It was John Blennings's hour of triumph, and he gloated a little. "An apology. Is that all you can think of? Aren't you afraid we'll be shot for spies, or—oh—" He broke off as two men came running toward them from across the street. They were waving something.

Blennings turned and started to run, but Diane caught his arm. "Don't do that, it looks suspicious," she snapped. "Stay where you are."

Blennings stood there, trembling, as the men approached. They carried little pads—and they were smiling. One of them made a long sentence from which Blen-

nings caught two words: "Diane Lyons." Diane caught them too. She smiled at the Russians and said to Blennings, "I believe the dear sweet suckers want my autograph."

They did. One of them bowed and offered her a pen. On each of their pads she wrote her name and a rather discourteous comment which shocked Professor Blennings.

A crowd gathered, and the autograph hunters made another speech in which Blennings caught the words "Diane Lyons" and "*tuyat'*" a couple of times. The crowd alarmed Blennings. It wasn't hostile, but nobody was smiling. Almost everybody wore an overcoat, and almost every overcoat was too long and too thin.

He interrupted Diane while she was asking the autograph hunters for a bottle of vodka. "I think we'd better get out of here."

She grinned at him. She was enjoying herself. "We can't leave without a souvenir of the trip. Besides, I'm thirsty."

He started to argue, but was interrupted. A man broke through the crowd and gave him a shove. "*Chio dyellat!*" he thundered at Blennings. He wore heavy ski trousers, a tunic, a peaked cap, and a gunbelt complete with one revolver.

"I don't understand," Blennings stammered, very pale.

THE man with the gun shouted some more. He advanced upon Blennings as the crowd fell back. He asked Blennings a question and when Blennings didn't answer he fainted a slap to Blennings' face with one hand while with the other he bunched up Blennings' shirt and jacket in his fist. Blennings stood at a sort of attention, paralyzed with fright.

Somebody pushed between him and the gunman, protecting him. Diane. She turned to the gunman and said distinctly, "Dimitri Schostakovitch, oobi tebornia," then whispered to Blennings, "You'd better start up the gimmick and get us the hell out of here. I just used up all my Russian on this boy."

"I can't," he moaned. "My mind . . . it's too upset to move."

To his surprise, she kissed him on the cheek. "All right, Johnny. Relax and get your mind back. I'll keep these boys busy for a while."

She stood up and calmly peeled off her mink coat.

"Minksy," she said. "Who wants it?"

She pointed with the coat at first one, then another of the women in the crowd. Gradually they got the idea, and they all started clamoring eagerly. The man with the gun made no objection. He kept staring at Diane's bare shoulders and very obviously had

visions of sharing the wealth.

"I'll have to let the coat go soon, Johnny," she called over her shoulder after a moment or two. "How's the mind?"

He straightened up. "I think we can make it."

The women's voices grew shriller, more beseeching.

"I knew we should've gone to Allenby's bedroom," Diane said. "Ah, well." She pronounced a censorable word, bundled up her mink and threw it high in the air.

As it sailed down, Blennings and the man with the cap came for her. They grabbed her at the same time . . .

Flick!

"Quitcha shovin'," snarled the little man as he pushed between her and Blennings and strutted on across the bridge.

"Where are we?" Diane asked, looking around at the thick automobile traffic honking its way across the bridge with no regard at all for the post-midnight hour.

"Brooklyn Bridge. It was the first place that came to my mind, or rather that my mind came to, in all that excitement." He looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry about your coat."

She put both hands on his shoulders and waited till his eyes met hers. "Sure. Now, look, Johnny, how about taking me home? This teleporting of yours is sensational. I admit it. But I

want out of this business."

"Of course. I'll take you home now, then go on traveling. I should be back with you in a week or two at the most."

"With me? What for?"

"Why—when I get back, I'll be important too, the same as you—though in a different way, of course. Perhaps then we can take up where we left off nineteen years ago."

Watching his innocent face, she didn't know whether to be angry or laugh. She felt centuries older than he.

"Johnny," she said, "you might as well know that when I was engaged to you, I was engaged to my French professor too. It was the only way I could think of to pass those courses." The darkness lent a strange glow to her yellow dress, somehow made her look divine. "Forget about us, Johnny. I'd never fall in love with you, no matter how important you were. I'm catching a plane home now. It's slower than teleporting, but I'm an old-fashioned girl." She shook hands with him. "Good-by, Johnny."

He might have let her go then, except that a few minutes ago, in Russia, she had kissed him. And she was so beautiful. It was all a matter of circumstances, he told himself—of being together. He knew what he had to do.

Aloud he said, "Don't bother

with a plane. I'll teleport you home. That'll save you possible embarrassment from reporters."

"It would help," she admitted.

He put his arm around her as a taxicab pulled up. "You're wastin' time standin' here, huddy," the cabbie called. "Want me to take you someplace . . . ?"

Flick!

VENUS was yellow, flat, uneven.

Except for an occasional up-thrust rock or bony-looking shrub, Venus was an empty graveyard. A hot dry mist thickened the twilight air.

"Where, Johnny?" she asked him wearily.

"Venus," he told her proudly. "And it matches very nicely with your dress."

She looked up into the mist that blotted out the sky. "Is it always so dark here?"

He nodded. "We're in the twilight region. This is all the daylight we'll ever get."

A hard expression cut across her winsome mouth. "How cozy. You've got some wild idea of keeping me here for a while, haven't you, Romeo!"

"I'm sorry, Diane, but I do." He tried to look firm as he said this, but succeeded only in looking dyspeptic.

She smiled, savagely, her lips pressed tight against her teeth. "All right, brave explorer," she



grated. "We'll see who gets sick of this business first!"

She walked away briskly through the yellow sand, her high heels biting into it with unnecessary force.

Bennings hurried after her, saying nothing for awhile, giving her anger a time to diminish. Finally he asked her, "What are you looking for?"

"Something, anything," she called over her shoulder. "People, animals, monsters."

"There's no life on Venus," he informed her. "This is the ideal desert island." Then, after a while, he said, "I hope you realize that you and I are the first human beings ever to reach the planets. It should make us both immortal."

She didn't answer. She just kept on walking, her heels tearing into the hot sand.

The dry heat made Professor Bennings perspire. He took off his jacket, but it didn't help much. His throat felt thick, urging him for water; but Venus, he knew, was a dry planet. He gritted his teeth and kept slogging through the sand after the svelte, energetic figure of Diane Lyons.

Suddenly she turned and ran back to him.

"Johnny, what's that?" She pointed toward a swirling cloud, far off on the gloomy horizon.

"Dust storm, I suppose. Venus has a lot of them. Don't be afraid,"

he added nervously, "it's too far away to affect us."

But he was wrong. It swooped down on them in a matter of seconds, lengthening as it came.

"Johnny, get us out of here," Diane cried.

Even as she spoke, the storm hit. Clouds of yellow sand crashed against them, knocking them to their knees . . . and again Bennings' mind became paralyzed.

Diane sensed the truth. She leaned over and shouted above the wind, "Mind out of order again?"

HE nodded, not daring to open his mouth and have the needlelike sand tear at his tongue.

The sand began coming heavier and faster, piling up over them. Again and again they had to shake themselves free of it before it drowned them beneath its deceptive weight.

Diane tugged at his arm. "There's some rocks over there," she screamed. "Let's try and get behind them." When she saw how helpless he was, she added, "Cover your eyes and I'll guide you."

She led him by the hand and they crawled painfully through the hailing yellow sand to a clump of rocks. As they drew near, the professor sighed with thankfulness, for the largest rock was hollowed into a cave, probably by centuries of sand storms such as this. They pushed inside and lay there, safe,

in a hollow some six feet deep and almost tall enough to stand in. They rested against the back of it and watched the sand streaming by. It seemed black instead of yellow, so fast and thick did it come. The wind howled as it flung the storm along, making noises Blennings had never heard wind make before.

He looked over at Diane Lyons. Her skin was red and pulsing from the beating of the sand, her taffy hair blown into wildness. She looked twenty again, instead of thirty-nine. She made a face at him and winked. "You and your desert island!" she said.

"I'm thirsty," Blennings said miserably.

"I could use a quart of gin myself."

Ten minutes later, the storm ended suddenly. All about them, the sand floated down and lay still, flaky and yellow and calm. After the wind, the sound of utter silence was painful.

Diane pointed with her finger. "There's some plants about fifty yards down. Let's see if maybe they grow dry martinis."

They found a total of five plants scattered at wide intervals. Like the sand, the plants were yellow, consisting of a cucumber-shaped stalk about a yard tall and four immense yellow leaves. When Diane touched a leaf, it curled round her arm, tearing itself off

the plant as it did so.

She unwound it carefully. "Hey," she said, "I guess it likes me."

"It must be attracted to the moisture of your body. This is a dry planet, remember."

She looked down at the torn remnants of her yellow dress. "I have an idea," she said. "Wait for me." She stripped a plant bare of its giant leaves and went back into the cave.

"Don't do anything dangerous," Professor Blennings called after her.

A MOMENT or two later, Diane Lyons came out dressed in a sarong of yellow leaves. "Desert island stuff," she said. "I wonder how long they hang on."

"Indefinitely, I guess." He remembered a movie he'd seen her in, a South Sea movie in which she wore a sarong. Professor Blennings pictured himself in one of these yellow leaves, his paunch overlapping it a little, and blushed at the thought.

"Mm," she said, "they're cool. Why don't you put one on? Make you sweat less."

"Oh, no . . . I'm comfortable this way."

She touched the cucumberlike stalk. "I wonder if this can be eaten?"

"Be careful," he cautioned. "It might be poisonous."

"Well, one of us has got to take

the chance—and I'm hungry!" She broke off about half the stalk and bit into it. "Not bad . . . tastes like a dry carrot, with just enough juice in to make you sure you're thirsty."

She walked back toward the cave. "Come on, explorer," she called. "Let's go home and eat."

They sat in the cave and stared for a while at the empty semi-darkness of Venus. From time to time, Diane broke off a piece of Venusian carrot and ate it.

"It's funny," she said at last. "If a scientist was up here, he'd be going nuts examining things. And what do I do? Dress up like Tarzan's mate and sit around eating a carrot."

He said slowly, "It's funnier than that. Here I am with you on a desert planet, all alone, at least sixty million miles away from civilization, and I can't think of a single romantic or even significant thing to say."

She put her hand over his. "I'm a grown-up girl now, Johnny. What could you possibly tell me?" She lay back on the soft sand floor of the cave. "I'm going to sleep now. Night, Johnny."

"Diane."

"Yes?"

"Could I have a piece of that carrot?"

She smiled. "Sure. Take the whole thing."

She fell asleep while he munched

on the carrot. He watched her in the endless half-light. In repose, her face remained lovely; but it was not a girlish loveliness. It was mature, and wise, and infinitely older than he. It would always be so. Personality, not circumstance, kept him and Diane Lyons apart. And personality, at forty, was changeless. He and Diane were strangers, would continue to be strangers even if they lived together on Venus for twenty years. Even, he thought with a blush of shame, if she saved his life another twenty times.

His mind enveloped the beautiful lady at his side, then reached out for the blue and white counterpane of her bed in California. The trip was far, but no farther than the distance between them . . .

FLICK! He shook her gently and she opened her eyes. She looked around at the familiar details of her bedroom, and blew a kiss at the gin bottle on her dressing table.

"Thanks, Johnny," she said. "I'm sorry it didn't work out."

He smiled wanly. "It was a good trip while it lasted."

Her finger traced patterns on the counterpane. "Look, Johnny—you won't tell anybody I went to Venus with you, will you? It'd sound so crazy the publicity would ruin me. You see, I've been hitting the bottle pretty hard lately and—"

His innocent features grew almost bitter. "Tell anybody? Not even myself, if I can help it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that some people are born to a life of action and some people are born to stay at home. I'm the latter type. I've learned that, and I'll never forget it. So I'm through with teleporting, forever. It's a gift I had no business getting in the first place. Why, if you hadn't come along with me I'd have gotten myself killed in no time."

She poured herself a drink of gin. "Oh, I don't know—"

And then she screamed, and in three jumps was out of the bedroom! Before Professor Blennings could quiet his nerves, she returned wearing a creamy white kimono. In her hand she carried four straight yellow leaves.

"Just in the nick of time!" she said.

"Yes," he said, a little regrettfully. "The moisture in the air must have loosened them."

"Would you like two for a souvenir?"

He shook his head.

She moved close to him. "Then

would you like to kiss me good-by?"

The kimono fitted her loosely, like one of Martha Spencer's dresses . . . But Martha, he thought, made a more gallant effort to fill hers out.

Diane's winsome mouth came very close. "Would you, Johnny?"

"Not exceptionally."

She smiled.

He closed his eyes on this vision of her. His mind moved back to his own home . . .

Flick! He peered about his house on this bright Sunday afternoon, a traveler returned from afar. He drank five glasses of water to wash the dust of Venus away, and then he felt hungry. He wanted to go out to dinner, but not alone.

Martha Spencer. She was the very person he wanted to be with now, for reasons he didn't bother to analyze. He sat down on the couch and dialed her number. While he waited for her to answer, he teleported one last time—to the other side of the couch.

Joseph Satin

WOLFIE

By THEODORE R. COGSWELL

*Magic always works . . . even
with the wrong ingredients!*

Illustrated by EMSG

PETER Vincent had too much to gain—and too much to lose—to risk committing murder in any of the usual ways. He was an obvious suspect if his cousin Anthony Lan should die violently, and much as he wanted his share of Anthony's money, he had an intelligent man's respect for the efficiency of the metropolitan police. That's why he sought, and after a long search found, Dr. Arsoldi.

Dr. Arsoldi's antecedents were

mysterious and his techniques were unorthodox, but that was to be expected from a practicing warlock. Peter had rather expected a dimly lighted room cluttered with stuffed owls, crystal balls, chalked pentagrams, and the other paraphernalia commonly associated with wizardry. Instead, he found himself in a small and rather dusty office, whose sole decoration was a flyspecked Petty Girl calendar. Dr. Arsoldi himself didn't correspond to the usual stereotype—he was a

broad shouldered and muscular young man with a crew-cut and hornrimmed glasses.

"How did you find me?" he asked as he gestured Peter to a chair. There was a trace of an Iowa nasal twang to his voice.

"The same way the others did," said Peter. "I kept looking in the right places. When a whole series of things occur in a limited area that can't be explained in the usual way, it's not too difficult to fit them together into a pattern that makes sense."

Dr. Arsoldi took a pack of cigarettes out of the pocket of his tweed jacket, lit one, and inhaled deeply.

"Things such as what?" he asked, letting the smoke trickle lazily from his nostrils.

"The Saunders case for one," said Peter. "The police are still trying to figure out how an elderly woman could burn to death in a locked room without even scorching the covers on her bed. Salamander, wasn't it?"

Dr. Arsoldi grinned. "I refuse to answer on the grounds that it might incriminate me."

"And that Morgan Bloomfellow who had his head smashed in on the seventh green at the Hunt Hills Golf Course. There were eight witnesses to swear that there was nobody within fifty yards of him at the time. That was a polter-

geist, wasn't it?" Vincent asked.

"Any prosecuting attorney who tried to establish that it was would be hauled away and locked up."

"Admitted," said Peter. "That's why I spent so much time and money tracking you down. I've uncovered eighteen cases in the last two years that look like your work, and in each case there was somebody who gained a great deal by the deaths. I came here to make you a business proposition."

"Sorry," said Dr. Arsoldi. "I've suspended operations. It got too dangerous."

"That's absurd," said Peter. "There isn't a way in the world the law could touch you."

"It's not the law I'm afraid of." Dr. Arsoldi hesitated. "I have a—I suppose you could call him a colleague. When we first started working together, I had to sign a contract. There's a clause in it that's been bothering me lately. Frankly, I've got my wind up and I'm getting out before it's too late."

"Perhaps I can persuade you to reconsider," said Peter. He reached in his briefcase and took out a packet of crisp new hundred dollar bills. "There's three thousand here," he said as he tossed it on the desk. "It's all I can lay my hands on now, but if we can come to an agreement, there'll be lots more."

Dr. Arsoldi stared at the bills and licked his lips as if they had

suddenly become dry.

"How much more?"

"Fifty thousand easy. Maybe sixty. I've seen the will."

Dr. Arsoldi reached out to touch the money and then jerked his hand back as if it was red hot.

"I'd like to," he said, "but I'm just plain scared. Last time there was almost a slip-up. I don't ever want to go through that again. Sorry." Reluctantly, he pushed the money back across the desk.

"You've got nothing to worry about," said Peter. "I've got a plan that's foolproof."

"So was the last one," said Dr. Arsoldi morosely, "and look what almost happened."

"What?"

GARLIC! My colleague and I made it possible for our client to temporarily metamorph into a vampire bat. It looked extremely simple. The finding would be 'death due to chronic pernicious anemia,' and she would inherit. And what happened? Her husband had to work late, so on his way home he stopped off at a little Italian restaurant and filled up on spaghetti and garlic bread. She was barely able to go through with it. If she had been a woman of less determination, I wouldn't be here now." He gave a little shudder. "As it was, she was laid up for a week afterward. The papers said she was prostrate with grief, but

actually she was suffering from severe systemic poisoning. You have no idea what garlic can do to a vampire's digestive tract."

Peter looked puzzled. "It would seem to me that once you had supplied the means, your responsibility ended. Suppose she hadn't gone through with it . . . I don't see how that would have affected you."

Dr. Arsoldi coughed nervously. "My colleague would have been upset. You see, my powers have been—well, conditionally delegated to me. He is a non-human being—not a supernatural one, mind you—I'll admit that I haven't yet explained to my own satisfaction just where he comes from, but it's obviously another dimension or a different vibrational level, or something like that. For some obscure reason, he has a special fondness for murderers who aren't caught, so we have an agreement between us—I provide the potential killers, and he provides the means for them to carry out their desires."

"I still don't see what you have to be upset about."

"The clause in the agreement I mentioned says that whenever I make one of these arrangements, I have to stand surety for its successful completion. If it doesn't come off, I'm really in hot water. I didn't realize the danger I was in until my last arrangement almost fell through . . .

"Look," he said, struck by a sudden thought, "for a moderate fee—say, three thousand—I could arrange for you to get in touch with him yourself. That way, any arrangement that was made would be between the two of you, and I wouldn't be involved."

"No, thanks," said Peter. "I'm familiar with what eventually happens to people who make pacts with the devil. I prefer to work through a middleman. That's why I came to you."

"He's not a devil," said Dr. Arsoldi impatiently. "This is the Twentieth Century. There's no need to postulate the supernatural every time something comes up that's outside the realm of our immediate experience. If you simply assume that he comes from a world with a science far in advance of ours, it makes for a much more acceptable explanation."

"Wherever he comes from, I want no personal dealings with him," said Peter decisively. He reached down and picked up the bundle of bills. "Sorry we couldn't reach an agreement."

"So am I," said Dr. Arsoldi, watching the money disappear with hungry eyes. "But much as I love money, I love living more."

AFTER a sleepless night and a restless morning, the obvious solution suddenly popped into Peter's mind. He rushed down-

town to see Dr. Arsoldi.

"I've got it," he said triumphantly.

"Got what?" asked Dr. Arsoldi.

"The perfect safeguard. All you have to do is arrange matters so I couldn't back out if I wanted to! Set some sort of a penalty so severe that I no longer have any choice in the matter."

The doctor's face took on a look of sudden interest. "That's an angle I hadn't thought of . . . What do you have in mind?"

"For the penalty?"

"No, for the operation. My colleague would take care of the other."

"All I need for the perfect murder is a light snowfall."

"Go ahead," said Dr. Arsoldi.

"Every night my cousin takes a walk in the park after dinner. He always takes the same route. He makes a complete circuit of the lake and then comes back across the middle of the commons. Nobody is ever out there at night. When he's found in the morning with his throat torn out, and no tracks in the snow but his own and those of a wolf, I think it would be rather difficult to implicate me in the affair."

"So you want to become a werewolf," said Dr. Arsoldi. "It's a nice idea. I'm sure my colleague would be pleased with it."

Peter produced the money again. "Is it a deal?"

An obvious struggle went on inside Dr. Arsoldi. Finally it subsided, and he picked up the sheaf of bills and dropped them in his pocket.

"There's a market half a block west," he said. "If you'll run down and pick me up a live chicken, I'll take up this matter with my colleague at once."

THERE was a slight powdering of snow drifting down from a gray sky when Peter Vincent next saw the good doctor.

"Here's what you asked for," he said, tossing two small packages on the desk. "And don't think finding a sample of wolf blood in New York City is an easy job . . . I tried half the veterinarians in town before I found one who could help me. As luck would have it, he was boarding an animal act whose owner was down with the flu. I passed myself off as a biologist who was working on canine blood types and got a specimen without any trouble. He sent it over by special messenger a half an hour ago."

"And the sample from your cousin?"

"I managed to break a glass at the right time and scratched his hand slightly. I got a little smudge on my handkerchief. It's in the package with the brown wrapping."

Dr. Arsoldi rubbed his hands. "Fine," he said, "fine! Come back

in about an hour and I'll have everything ready for you . . ."

When Peter returned, there was a strong odor of brimstone in the air. He sniffed and looked at Dr. Arsoldi questioningly.

"Oh, that," said Dr. Arsoldi. "He evidently comes from some place with an atmosphere containing a high percentage of sulphur dioxide. There's no need to assume that every living thing in the Universe has to be an oxygen breather." He sounded as if he were more interested in convincing himself than he was Peter. "If one postulates a greatly advanced race which has developed a method for warping space that makes instantaneous transmission of material objects possible—"

"What about the chicken?" interrupted Peter.

"That is a bit difficult to explain, I'll admit, but that's no reason to—"

Pete interrupted again. "Did he bring it?"

Dr. Arsoldi nodded and handed him a small bottle containing perhaps an ounce of a colorless liquid.

"Is that all?" said Peter. "I expected something more spectacular."

"You'll find the results impressive enough. Two minutes after you drink it, you'll take on your new form. The rest is up to you."

"Thanks," said Peter, pocketing the bottle. "Keep your eye on the



newspapers. This should rate headlines in tomorrow's noon edition."

"I hope there's no slip-up," said Dr. Arsoldi. "Remember, I have to stand surety for you."

"You've got nothing to worry about," said Peter breezily.

"I hope for your sake I haven't. If you suddenly changed your mind, the consequences would be equally unfortunate for you. Your suggestion about arranging things so you couldn't back out was an excellent one. Have you wondered why I wanted a sample of your cousin's blood?"

"I was a bit curious," admitted Peter.

"It was my colleague's idea. He used it in preparing the contents of the bottle I just gave you. Once you make the change, you won't be able to regain human form until you've tasted your cousin's arterial blood."

"I see what you mean," Peter said thoughtfully. "I hope none of the park policemen carry guns loaded with silver bullets."

PETER Vincent checked his watch, opened his bedroom window, removed his clothes, and then, satisfied that everything was ready, tossed down the contents of the little bottle in one gulp.

There was a sudden buzz from the telephone beside his bed. Peter grimaced in annoyance and picked it up.

"Yes?"

"This is Dr. Arnett, down at the Stayvesant Dog and Cat Hospital. I've just discovered that an unfortunate mistake was made, and I thought I'd better call you at once."

Peter felt a sudden strangeness that warned him that the change was about to begin.

"What mistake?" he asked roughly.

Dr. Arnett sounded most apologetic. "I should have got the specimen myself, but Mrs. Datesman's Angora had a terrible toothache, and you know how Angoras are."

"No, I don't," snapped Peter. "What about the sample?"

"Well, I sent the kennelman to get it, and it seems he got mixed up and drew a specimen from the wrong animal. You see, Mrs. Lincoln's son brought her 'Wolfie' in this morning for a mange treatment, and . . ."

Peter started to say something, but his vocal chords weren't operating.

"I know it sounds stupid," said Arnett, "but the kennelman thought I said 'Wolfie' instead of wolf—"

Peter's ears joined his vocal chords as he felt a sudden twisting slithering change start inside him. It didn't hurt; he just felt different—as if he had suddenly turned into an almost fluid jelly and was about to run out across

the floor. All his senses were disconnected. He couldn't see, he couldn't hear; he was lost in a wet and sloppy darkness. Then he felt a sudden surge of rhythmic contractions as the undifferentiated cellular mass that had been his body began to take on a new shape.

Suddenly he could see again—but not very well or very far. And he could breathe—but only with difficulty. He seemed possessed of a severe case of asthma. When his sense of touch returned, it brought with it an intolerable itch on his left side. One hind foot kicked automatically at a large hairless spot where the mange was especially severe, but it didn't do much good. Without thinking, he turned and snapped at the smarting area. That didn't do much good either.

From the telephone that rested on the thick carpet beside him, the voice of Dr. Arnett went on and on in explanation and apology.

Peter didn't wait to hear him out. He had urgent business to attend to.

ANTHONY Lan walked over to the large picture-window, pulled aside the curtains, and looked out into the darkness.

"Expecting somebody, dear?" asked his wife Muriel.

He shook his head. "I just wanted to see if he was still there."

"Who?"

"Take a look. There beside the elm tree."

Muriel peered out the window. "Why, the poor little fellow! He looks cold. Where did he come from?"

"He followed me home from the park. Darn near scared the life out of me, too. I was crossing the common when I heard a snarl from a clump of bushes off to one side. It wasn't a very snarly snarl—if you know what I mean—but it gave me a bit of a turn. I swung around and saw him waddling toward me as fast as his legs would carry him, snorting and puffing like a steam engine. When he got almost to me he crouched down and made a leap as if he was trying to get up to lick my face, but he was so old and fat he was barely able to get off the ground. I tried to shoo him away, but he kept following me. Every once in a while he'd make another run and try to jump up on me again."

"Sounds like love at first sight," laughed Muriel. She looked out again at the small white shape that crouched shivering on the snow-covered lawn. "Tony, it's cold out there. We can't leave the poor thing out all night. He'll freeze to death."

"He's old and he's mangy and he probably smells," Anthony grumbled. "He'd be better off out of his misery."

"I don't care," she said. "I'm

going to bring him in. I'll call the Animal Rescue League to come around and pick him up in the morning."

When Muriel returned with the animal, she placed it gently down on the rug in the middle of the living room. Anthony sniffed and buried himself behind his newspaper. Peter lay quiet for a moment, soaking in warmth and gathering his strength. Then, with a sudden pistonning of little legs, he hurled himself at his cousin.

The newspaper went flying, and for a moment there was a mad tangle of dog and man.

"Get this beast off me," yelled Anthony.

Muriel finally stopped laughing long enough to go over and pick the small dog up by the scruff of

the neck. She held it up.

"He likes you."

"Likes me in a pig's eye! He acted as if he wanted to tear my throat out!"

"With what?" said Muriel. "The poor old fellow hasn't got any teeth." She sat down with the fat little poodle in her lap and patted him on the head. "Maybe he has senile delusions," she said. "Maybe he thinks he's a wolf."

ELEVEN seconds after the Animal Rescue League put Peter Vincent out of his misery, Dr. Arsoldi's colleague arrived to put him in his.

Theodore R. Cogswell

DIET FOR DRAGONS

A vital factor in the current abatement of maiden-devouring by growing dragons is the recent development of a carefully conceived non-protein ersatz diet which, according to unofficial medical reports, is keeping the younger fire-breathing lizards off their time-honored staple. Since rapid dragon dental decay, caused by the softness of 20th-century life, forces mature monsters off meat entirely, the problem, which has bothered swains from the time Perseus rescued Andromeda, looks to be in a fair way toward final solution.

Bases of the new dragon diet are maidenhair, a common fern with tender fronds, missletoe, a variety of cereal bread, virgin's bower, an easily obtained shrub, and virgin's milk, a packaged food, which also does duty as a scale-brightener. If your dragon finds this diet monotonous we shall be glad to send you a list of fifty tasty recipes upon receipt of \$20.00 in pennies.



halfway to hell

By JEROME BIXBY

*With a spirited forger on his side on the
Other Side, why should Morehead give
a damn about the Letter of the Law?*

Illustrated by KNOTH

ON my twenty-first birthday, I decided that the best life was the hell-raising life, and I'd live it. Wine, women, song and ill-gotten gain. I wasn't religious; at the same time, I was cautious. If there was an afterlife, I didn't want to chisel myself out of my share of Heaven. Eternity's a long time, and twice as long in Hell.

So I called up a demon. No common demon. An extra-special demon. It took me four years to

learn how, during which I lived an exemplary life. I didn't drink, I didn't swear, I didn't wench, I didn't even smoke.

Instead, I studied. I advertised—in cloaked terms, of course. I traveled to some of the damnedest—literally—places. And finally I found someone with the information I wanted, and paid a small fortune for it: all the money my parents had sent me, thinking I was very soberly and intently studying abroad.

And so, as I've said, I learned how to summon a demon.

MY demon's name was Zurp. After I'd concluded the ritual in my Istanbul hotel room, he appeared in the pentagon I'd chalked on the rug with a flash of nameless-colored light and a puff of putrid smoke . . . except that he didn't really appear. He was invisible.

"Where are you?" I demanded peevishly. "I want to see who I'm doing business with."

"Sight of me," came his voice from the empty pentagon, "would drive you mad. Only damned souls are permitted to see us, because they deserve it. Sorry I can't oblige."

I let it go. Relaxed in an easy chair in front of the pentagon, I told Zurp why I'd called him.

"I took pains, my friend," I said, "to call up a demon who worked as a file clerk in Purgatory. One of those sadistic morons who work in Hell would be of no use to me."

"Okay," replied the voice, sounding a little flattered. "First time it ever happened to me, but I'm just like any other demon, except I got brains. You call me up, I gotta do what you want. What is it?"

"I'm going to sin my head off from now on. For the rest of my life, I intend to bust rules all over the place."

"We'll keep a spot warmed up

for you," Zurp promised happily.

"That," I said, "is precisely what I want to avoid. That's where you come in."

"Huh?"

"You're going to juggle the records, pal. Every time an Observing Imp sends a nasty little memo on me to Purgatory, you're going to intercept it. When I die, I want my dossier to read: Faithful Little Lamb."

"How come you know so much about Purgatorial procedure?" he asked suspiciously.

"None of your business." The old man who'd sold me the formula for calling up a Purgatory file clerk had looked about a thousand years old, though he'd claimed to be only three hundred. He'd balked at telling me how he'd achieved his immortality, but I knew he'd come across if I blackmailed him with the threat of betraying his shenanigans to the proper demoniacal authorities.

"So," I told Zurp, "give me your Solemn Satanic Oath that you'll do it."

"You even know about that, eh?" the voice said uncomfortably. "Well, I don't know. Kill the memos on you before they get to the files, eh? Bless me, you could commit every sin in the Universe and get by with it, if I did that!"

"I intend to."

"Well, I don't know. It's never been done—"

"You'll do it, chum, or else."

"Or else what?"

"Or else I'll pour holy water all over you. I have a glass of it right here. Want a sample?"

I STUCK a finger in the glass and shook several drops into the pentagon. They struck something. Scalding hisses. Zurp squawled.

"Want more?"

"No, no! I'll do what you want! Bless me, where did you learn that?"

"You ask too many questions," I said, and shook more drops at him.

After he'd finished swearing, we got down to business. I made sure there was no opening whereby he could trick me. An agreement with a demon is as good as a contract: he's bound to it right down to the last letter, once he's agreed. But you have to be careful; you have to choose your words.

At last it was agreed. No loopholes. Zurp, in his capacity as clerk in the Purgatory Central File Room, would destroy every memo, every communiqué, every last line that related to my sins. He would do this the moment they reached his hands—if he had hands. He would double-check every Friday to make sure none had escaped him. He would do this with utmost energy right to the very second I died.

"It'll keep me up after hours," he grumbled.

I raised the glass of holy water.

"All right!" he yelped. "I'll do the job. You have my Solemn Satanic Oath I'll do it! What more do you want? I have to like it, too?"

So that was that. The demon would have to keep his Oath. When I died, the routine check of the Files would whitewash me and I'd head for Heaven. Period.

I dismissed Zurp. He gave me another cussing. I raised the glass of holy water. His nothingness vanished with another puff of foul smoke.

I poured myself the first drink I'd allowed myself in four years—since the age of twenty-one, when I'd become a man and accountable to the Powers for my acts. I killed half the bottle. Then I went out to get me a woman. Maybe two women.

It was good Scotch.

WELL, I swindled. I lied. I seduced. I cheated. I blackmailed. Pretty soon I owned a factory—I'd decided long ago that making for a nickel and selling for a buck was the safest way to steal money. Only fool luck had kept the law off my neck on the way up. I discovered that with the sure knowledge of Heaven awaiting me, sin as I might, I could happily take chances the ordinary person

would never dream of—even the ordinary unscrupulous person.

Though I'd made no arrangement with Zerp for Earthly riches or impunity from the consequences of my Earthly acts, I climbed and climbed until I was set for life. There I stopped. I had no lust for power. Better not to push my luck too far.

Eventually, I wasn't as young as I'd been. I slowed to a fast run, because I couldn't gallop any more. Soon I was due for a burn-out. I didn't mind dying at around fifty, though: Heaven was waiting.

I'd never been able to locate the old guy who sold me the demon formula, in case you're wondering. I couldn't even remember his name. He must have known at the time what I'd probably try to pull in the future, and hypnotized me or something.

It was a gray November day when I was buried—the sort of day that always depresses me anyway. It had snowed the night before. The poison my wife had put in my hot chocolate nightcap was as slow-working and painless as (knowing my wife's efficiency) it must be undetectable. So I was able to distract myself during my last mortal hours, as I lay there expiring à la carte, so to speak, by estimating the number of big flakes that drifted silently, whitely past my bedroom window.

I was irritated at the whole affair, naturally. There were still a few things I wanted to kick around, but what could I do?

Toward morning, I died.

At eight o'clock, the maid, unable to rouse me by tapping at my door, roused my lovely young wife instead—the first time in years that Marianne hadn't sprawled around till noon. There were no angry yells. Obviously a lot of rousing hadn't been necessary. Marianne must have lain awake drooling all night for this moment.

She came in from her bedroom across the hall. We hadn't shared a bed for a decade. It was that kind of marriage: first a swap—she'd wanted money, I'd wanted her—and now a bad odor. Recently we'd just kept out of each other's way. Now she'd handed me the knife.

She wailed convincingly at sight of me and sent the maid hopping to call the doctor. After the door had closed, she bent over to tweak my ice-cold nose; and said, "Well, that takes care of you!"

Then she went to the window and fluttered a white handkerchief.

A FEW minutes later, my next-door neighbor, Harry Cramm, was let upstairs by the maid, who said the doctor was on his way, and departed looking sorrowful. I would miss her, too; in another



HALFWAY TO HELL

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week, I'd have scored.

Harry said eagerly, "Is he dead, sugar-skin?"

"It's hard to tell, sweetums," Marianne said with a happy smile. "With him, it's always been hard to tell. But I'm pretty sure he is."

"C'mere, you gorgeous wonderful you," said Harry, and grabbed her close. Kissed her. Indulged still more of my husbandly provinces, though minor ones, before my glazed eyes. I wished for my flesh again—I'd have kicked them until they bled. But I could only watch.

Curious sensation. I lay there dead as last week's meatloaf, yet I could see and hear as plainly as ever. Minutes dragged by. The doctor came.

I was beginning to worry a little—when the hell would I start for Heaven?

As the doctor examined me, I reviewed my abundantly sinful life. As the damn fool pronounced me dead of heart failure, I decided that Zurp must have somehow doublecrossed me, in spite of all my precautions. As my weeping wife made arrangements for an immediate funeral, assisted by my sympathetic next-door neighbor—both of them giving Academy performances—I was one big bundle of frustration, fury and fear.

I prefer not to go into detail about the embalming process. Emptied out like a valise! The

most outrageous experience of my life!

Marianne had the decency to pick out a good coffin—mahogany, silver, an excellent Danish satin. I wasn't impressed. With my bankroll, she could have bought a solid gold one.

I found, after they closed the lid, that I could see right up through it and, indeed, through the top of the hearse that carried me to my final resting place.

As I've said, it was a depressing gray November day. I rolled slightly this way and that in my coffin, and watched treetops and telephone wires whisk by, and watched a large cloud float sedately from my left to my right and then execute an abrupt about-face as we turned into the Happy Eternity Cemetery.

A few relatives were there—those that bad lived within reaching distance of my wallet. I'd kept the terms of my will no secret and they all knew pretty much what their cut was. They cried because I hadn't left them more, and Marianne cried because she had to give them anything at all, and I felt like crying because I couldn't climb out and take care of her and them personally.

I WAS lowered into my grave. A snatch of overheard conversation informed me that they'd had a hard time opening up the

frozen ground to receive me. I'd have laughed if I could. Thump at the bottom. Faint voices from above, then a handful of dirt rattling down on my coffin like hail. They started to fill in the grave. It grew darker and darker until at last one lone dot of gray light found its way downward. Then a cloud fell on that. Pitch darkness. The faraway thumping of spades, flat on dirt.

Silence. *What now?* I wondered. The bottom of my coffin seemed to drop away from under me, and I seemed to fall endlessly, and it seemed to grow warmer. *So it's to be Hell after all,* I thought sourly: *that dirty little doublecrossing bastard Zurp.*

My fall slowed. I lit on my feet, light as a leaf, on an unimaginably high, unimaginably long bridge—a ribbon of a bridge. About six feet wide, composed of some black shiny substance—obsidian, probably—it ran far, far off into the hazy distance before me, arching slowly downward from where I stood and dwindling to thread-thinness before vanishing.

From below came vast red flickerings, like heat lightning, and gusts of pungent yellow smoke.

I walked a little closer to the edge and shuddered when I peered over. Deep smoky nothingness, nothingness upon nothingness, nothingness without end—mile after cubic mile of boiling yellow

smoke, shot with ragged flames that licked through the yellow abyss like serpents' tongues.

As I watched, there came a lull in the smoke directly beneath me. A channel opened. It was like looking down a vast well, or through the wrong end of a telescope. I saw that the nothingness had a bottom: a black, jagged surface, incredibly far down, dotted with ugly cliffs and sluggish streams of lava and fuming lakes of molten metal. I thought I could see tiny figures leaping about, and even fancied I heard anguished wails.

I stepped back. So there was Hell.

So what was I doing up on this bridge?

The shiny black stuff was uncomfortably warm to my ghostly feet. Sulphur and brimstone were acrid in the air. The bridge was not the pleasantest place to be. Still, it was a long throw from what I'd imagined eternal damnation to be like.

Well, I thought, a bridge is to walk someplace on.

LOOKING around, I wondered which direction to take, and for the first time saw the sign—one of those metal things in the shape of a hand, finger pointing. It was riveted to a rod set into the bridge about thirty feet away. In large, heat-crackled black letters, it said:

TO PURGATORY

I could have kissed the thing. I was so relieved. Purgatory was better than Hell any old day! A thousand times better! Evidently I was only partially damned. Now I had a chance coming to expiate my sins—a chance to head for the Pearly Gates instead of down into that stinking flame-shot yellowness. Maybe Zurp hadn't crossed me; maybe he'd just slipped up and let one or two of the less hair-raising memos on me get through.

Hopefully, I started walking. I'd gotten only a few feet when I heard a shrill whistling sound overhead. All my money hadn't kept me out of the last war—I'd ducked bombs in Normandy. My first instinct was to hit the dirt now. But there wasn't any.

I looked up. A thin middle-aged man, wearing a burial tux and an expression of utter disbelief, came spinning down through the smoky darkness.

I waited for him to light, being only too glad at the prospect of company on the long walk to Purgatory. But the middle-aged man's velocity didn't slow, as mine had. Turning and twisting like a hooked trout, he descended to the bridge . . . and through it!

I peered over the edge. He was still falling, still spinning, dwindling, now hidden by the boiling smoke, now revealed again, smaller

and smaller. As he approached the floor of Hell, he began to wail. The wail rose to a blood-curdling yowl. His tuxedo burst into flame and vanished from him in a puff of smoke, as did his hair. He landed flat on his back, bounced, scrambled to his feet and started to dance around.

His rapid passage had created another of those channels down through the smoke. I got a good look at the demon who came bounding across the black rocks to take charge of the newcomer. I shuddered again. Four feet tall, it was, and muscled like a gorilla. Bright red skin, and a white-hot pitchfork.

Squish went the pitchfork into the middle-aged man's—or soul's—stern sheets. A piping scream. The soul leaped six feet into the air, every limb rigid. The pitchfork thrust out again.

The smoke closed in.

I WALKED on. And on and on. And on. The bridge showed no sign of ending. For every mile I put behind me, another emerged from the mysterious haze ahead.

At last I came to another sign:

5 MILES TO PURGATORY

Prepare Yourself
Are You Ready to Repent?

I wasn't—but I would if necessary.

I walked on. Three more souls came spinning down to swish through the bridge and on down to Hell. I sneered after them. Jerks. If they'd had any imagination, they'd be up on this bridge instead of down there getting the white-hot prod.

Another sign: ONE MILE TO PURGATORY

Another: $\frac{1}{2}$ MILE TO PURGATORY

Then five signs in a row:

NOW THAT YOU'RE
TO THIS PLACE SENT,
PREPARE YOURSELF

YOU MUST REPENT
PURGATORY IS FOR YOU!

Ahead I could see the end of the bridge, at last. It brought up smack against a reddish stone wall that extended up and down and to either side as far as I could see. A huge, smoke-shrouded, perfectly blank wall—no windows, turrets, nothing. Just two small bronze doors, where bridge and wall met, and beside them a sort of low stone blockhouse.

As I came closer, I saw that the blockhouse was actually separated from the great wall by a gap of ten or twelve feet. The bridge just ended with the building, and beyond, across that formidable smoky space, were the doors shining dully in the red flickerings from below.

I reached the blockhouse dead-tired—and if you don't like puns, you should feel the way I felt. And there I got my first close-up look at a demon.

Except that this one wasn't entirely a demon.

HE came out of the blockhouse, scowling. Four feet tall, muscles on his muscles, bright-red skin, barbed tail, two pointed horns like a bull yearling's—all that was okay.

But the horns supported a halo . . . a lovely, shining faintly bluish halo!

He looked at me indifferently as I stopped before him. "A rich one, eh?" he grunted.

Looking down, I realized for the first time that I still wore my burial tux.

The demon extended a hand with three-inch claws and fingered the material of my sleeve. "Not bad. I'll put in a bid for it—you won't need it no longer. Okay, mac, what's your name?"

"C-ch-ch . . . Charles Morehead."

"Um." He opened the book he'd brought out and clawed over pages, ran down a list of names. "—Moreby, Morecik, Morefingle . . . ah, Morehead. Charles B. Morehead. Murdered by your wife on December 17, 1953. Time of death, 5:11 P.M. Age 44. Occupation, manufacturer. Reported Sins—" His eyes

widened. He looked up at me in surprise. "Well, I'll be blessed! You're the first Interim Sinner we've had for a long time!"

"I—Interim Sinner?"

"Yeah. You got only a couple small sins on you. Heck, they're not even sins—just sinful thoughts you had, after you died and before your soul was picked up by the Soul Squad. That's what Interim Sinning means." He spat a stream of vitriol over the edge of the bridge. "Stupid thing to do. Live a peachy-pure life, and then get the boot to Purgatory on an I. S. rap." He studied the book again. He leered. "Was she really such a hot looker?"

"Who?"

"The maid. Who else? Says here you lusted carnally for her three hours after you died. Man, don't you ever give up? Also says you harbored homicidal desires, same time, same place. You wanted to kill—" he squinted to read—"Marianne Morehead—your wife, huh?—and Larry Cr—"

"Harry," I said bitterly. "Harry Cramm."

SO Zurp had doubledealed me, after all, by not warning me about Interim Sinning. If I ever got my hands on him, I'd freeze his—

"H'm," said the demon, blinking. "New entry. Homicidal intentions toward one Yurp . . . no, it's Zurp. Hey, what's the guy's last

name? We got a demon here by that—"

"Jones," I said hastily. "Zurp Jones." I'd have to be careful what I thought, evidently, or I'd have a record of Interim Sins as long as my arm.

"What now?" I asked warily.

"Oh, just go on across. Take the door marked REDEMPTION OF CLASS B SINS—"

"Go on across what?"

He grinned as he saw me eying the twelve-foot gap of smoky nothing between the end of the bridge and the door he'd indicated. The grin revealed two-inch tusks.

"You can walk right across, chum. You see, every so often something lousies up and the bridge catches a damned soul instead of letting it slip through. So I check on every soul that gets here, and if down below is where it belongs—" he made a pushing motion with his thick arms—"that's where it goes! You oughta hear them holler when they realize they're not going to get into Purgatory. Man, it's crazy!"

"But—but I can just walk across?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

I didn't like that tusky grin. I thought, What if I'm one of those accidentally caught damned souls, and he's just been waiting for me to go near that edge so he could push me off . . .

Then I thought, Well, I can't

hang around *here* for the rest of eternity.

So here goes.

Grimly I strode forward and stepped off the end of the bridge. I didn't fall. Though there was nothing under my feet except space and smoke, I was able to walk right across the gap to the door marked: REDEMPTION OF CLASS B SINS.

I turned to give the demon a shaky wave, standing on nothingness by the door, but he'd vanished back into the blockhouse. He'd be out soon enough, though. Far, far back along the bridge, I could see another tiny figure walking toward the gates of Purgatory.

I pushed open the door by its huge bronze handle, and stepped through.

THIE change in atmosphere was spectacular. Outside, the scene had squared more or less with the conventional pictures of Hell and damnation and so forth. But inside was a clean cool corridor, indirectly lit, softly carpeted, decidedly pleasant. The only jarring note was the paintings—or were they photographs?—that lined the walls in modern frames: blood-chilling scenes of Hell and Hellish torment, done with an authority and craftsmanship that would have turned Doré green. Also, there was the faintest tang of sulphur and brimstone in the air. I supposed no

amount of air-conditioning could keep that out.

Suddenly I wondered if the whole approach to Purgatory—the bridge with its terrifying vista below, and the damned souls screeching as they fell, even this hall with its hair-raising pictures and tang of Hellish odor—I wondered if it all wasn't designed to scare the pants off halfway-souls like me and promote our repentance.

I straightened my ghostly shoulders and walked down the corridor to the door at the far end. I opened it and, ready for the worst, hoping for the best, went inside.

A neat, modern reception room. Several comfortable-looking chairs and a divan, a glass-topped table with magazines and newspapers on it; and across the room an enormous metal desk at which sat another of the demons with horns supporting halo. This one was taller and slimmer, though, and had white hide instead of red. And no three-inch claws.

"Please take a seat," he said in a mild voice. "I'll be with you in a moment." He turned again to the old lady soul who sat in the chair beside his desk.

I sat on the divan and picked up a copy of *The Wall Street Journal* and pretended to read. An item on Ansel Copper caught my eye. I blinked and looked again.

Ansel Copper up six points? Since when? I thought unbeliev-

ingly. That stock was a dog from way back.

I turned to the cover of the *Journal* to see the date, and my eyes practically came out on stalks.

The thing was dated June, 1954!

Naturally Hell and its surrounding regions would be the first to receive advance copies of the *Journal*, I thought a moment later—but this was really an advance copy! Lord, what it would be worth up on Earth. Why, with it you could—

Whup!

I clamped a curtain over my inner eye and put the magazine aside. I wanted no dreams of avarice and dishonest gain added to my record. Things were risky enough at present.

AFTER a minute or two, the old lady soul departed. The receiving demon beckoned me over to the chair she had vacated.

"Now, then," he said, picking up a sheaf of papers from a tray and glancing at the top sheet. "Mr. Morehead, isn't it?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"My name is Alfad." He rifled the papers in his hand and gave me a pleasant smile. No tusks. "Nothing to be afraid of, Mr. Morehead. You're in no danger. Purgatory is at your service. Here we offer you a chance to redeem certain sins which, though not sufficient to condemn you to Hell,

are enough to bar you from Heaven, at least for the present."

"I—I understand," I said nervously.

"You won't enjoy your stay here," he went on a little grimly. "You're going to suffer, Mr. Morehead. Facing up to your past sins is not a pleasant thing. But it must be done, if you are to enter Heaven." He looked at me sharply. "You do want to enter Heaven, don't you, Mr. Morehead?"

"Oh, yes—yes, I do!"

"Very good, then." He studied the top sheet briefly. "H'm. You're not badly off, really. A few Class B Sins and one Class C. You know, sir, it's hardly proper to lust for a member of the opposite sex after you're dead."

"I know," I said humbly. "I'm sorry."

"I wouldn't worry, however. If your repentance proceeds as it should, you'll be in Heaven within a month."

"A month?"

"Perhaps even sooner. We've speeded the process quite remarkably in recent centuries by employing modern psychiatric techniques. You will suffer enough for each sin in a few days to cleanse your soul of it entirely and forever. As I say, it's not pleasant, but you'll thank us afterward. We receive many testimonial letters from Heaven. Would you care to see a few?"

"Oh, no. No, thanks. I'll take

your word for it. And I'll do my best."

"I'm sure you will. I just thought you might need a little encouragement. I realize how disturbing this is to you."

LIKE blazes you do, I thought, my ghostly spine cold as ice. I'm walking the tightrope to end all tightropes . . . Heaven on one side, Hell on the other!

"Just remember, Mr. Morehead," Alfad was saying. "The pain you'll feel is like any other pain—mere agony, soon over—though, in this case, never to be forgotten. Now, if you'll just go through that door marked IDENTIFICATION—"

"I—yes, sir," I said, getting up. "Excuse me. I wonder if I might ask a question?"

"Anything at all."

"How is it that you dem—I mean, you—or—people all wear both horns and haloes? Are you demons or angels?"

He sighed, ran a hand over his horns, on up through his blue-glowing halo. "It is confusing, isn't it? Actually we're both. That is, the officers and personnel of Purgatory comprise both demons and angels. Purgatory is a two-power zone, you see, under the joint administration of Heaven and Hell. So we who work here wear the emblems of both. We don't like it, but orders are orders. While on

duty, we're called Demels."

"Are you—are you—?"

He smiled. "I'm an angel, Mr. Morehead. The halo is real; the horns are plastic."

"I see. Well, I certainly want to thank you for your trouble."

"Not at all. Simply my job. I think I should warn you in advance that you may not find the demons among us quite so cooperative. Or perhaps you'll find them too cooperative. Our work here is—or should be—an objective examination of halfway-souls to determine their qualifications for Heaven or Hell. But I'm afraid that the demon Demels often try to corrupt souls during the process and thus doom them to Hell. Better watch your step."

"I—I will."

Alfad handed me my dossier, and I walked toward the door marked IDENTIFICATION.

"Good luck, Mr. Morehead." He ran a hand over his horns, and sighed again.

IN IDENTIFICATION, a barrel-chested, sullen character whom I pegged immediately as a demon—horns and halo, naturally, but also claws, tusks and a scowl—sat me down before a huge camera and mugged me, front and side and from another angle I couldn't quite grasp. Then I was finger-printed. Each of my ghostly fingers was stuck in a little thimble gizmo

filled with greenish gas and, after removal, left a print floating there.

The demon Demel tore open a cellophane packet with his tusks, and flung a folded white robe at me. It smelled of recent laundering and a mild disinfectant.

"Get outa the mokey suit and inta that robe," he growled.

I did so.

The demon said, "Go through that door for your physical," and sat down with his back to me.

I resisted the impulse to kick him through the ceiling, and opened the door.

The doctor was an angel Demel. It was a relief. I was beginning to have my fill of the demons—they looked at you as though they'd like to tear you apart and put you back together wrong. Also, there was the warning Alfad had given me that the demons often tried to corrupt Heavenbound souls. I decided to keep my guard way up until I got out of Purgatory and was tuning a harp; the stakes were far too high to gamble with.

The physical was short and simple. The doctor measured the density of my shade by taking a sample from an earlobe; then he measured my cohesiveness by standing me in a sort of wind-tunnel in which I slipped and flapped and stretched into quivering streamers. And that was all.

"You're in fine shape," he said,

stamping my dossier. "You'll survive your redemption easily."

That was both encouraging and a little blood-chilling—if I'd had blood. Evidently you went through Hell, or a large fraction of it, before you repented.

Thank God, I thought (as if He'd had anything to do with it), I don't have to redeem all my *real* sins—the ones they don't know about! They'd keep Hell hustling for half an eon!

The doctor sent me through a door.

It began.

YOU'LL have to forgive me—or I don't, for all I care—if I brush over the details. I find them agonizing to recall, much less write about.

There was no physical torture involved. It was all mental.

Give me plucked fingernails any day!

I faced myself.

In small dark rooms, with Demels invisible beside me speaking in insistent tones, I writhed and groaned and screamed and perspired ghostly perspiration and was carried back to the moment of my Interim Sins.

I turned my face away in horror from the full sight of them—from the almost fourth-dimensional sight of them, as if I were somehow seeing around around each sinful thought, seeing it as a whole, cause

and effect and my ugly little motivations and their terrible truancy from all that was Good, seeing how I'd wandered—poor little lost lamb, now found.

I turned my head away. Always an unseen force turned it back and kept my eyes open. I wailed to be allowed to undo my sins. I was told implacably that I could not, that all I might do was cleanse my soul.

All this from my measly Interim Sins! Even in my agony, I could wonder what it would have been like if I'd been below in Hell, repenting *all* my sins. It was a hideous thought.

Agony of the spirit increased. I could think of nothing but the repentance at hand.

I screamed. I wept. Days passed. Weeks. Expertly the Demels guided me back again and again to my Interim Sins, magnified them, brought them to focus, left me with them.

I saw. I repented.

At last it was over.

The Demel in the last small dark room, where I had been for nine days, reached over and switched on the desk lamp. He regarded me critically as he made notes in my dossier. "All done, Mr. Morehead."

Trembling, almost unbelieving, I rose to one elbow on the couch. "It's—over?"

"Yes. You've repented admira-

bly. You are genuinely sorry for the sins we've worked with."

And, by Heaven, I was! It was incredible. Not sorry for all my other sins, mind you, but the Purgatorial techniques had filled me with a vast and sincere repentance for the Interim Sins!

How had they made me repent wanting the maid and to kill Marianne and Harry? Damned if I knew. Damned if I wanted to think about it. But they had. I might feel foolish about it, but I was sorry for the sinful thoughts I'd had.

It felt strange, being sorry about something.

A N escalator took me to the top floor of Purgatory. A two-foot imp, the first I'd seen, conducted me into the Waiting Room and told me that Heaven could accommodate only two hundred souls per hour from this station, and that I might have a long wait ahead of me.

I was happy to wait. The ordeal was over. I was in! I'd expiated my sins and was headed for Heaven!

I found a seat and looked around at all the other shining, smiling faces. In me was all the vast and indescribable relief they must be feeling—and a deep-down smug satisfaction at having pulled off an all-time dilly.

Man, if those half-witted Ex-

aminers only knew what a galloping sinner they were passing out of this place!

The enormous golden door at the far end of the room folded up and back and two Demels beckoned the foremost row of souls to rise and follow them. They filed through the door. As they crossed the threshold, one by one, they shot up out of sight at tremendous speed. I thought I heard faraway laughter and the strains of a distant harp. The door folded down again.

Now there'd be another hour's wait before the next lot. I counted the rows in front of me: three of them.

In three hours I'd be in Heaven! I closed my eyes contentedly.

"Hey, mac. Pass!"

I opened my eyes again and looked around. A small, furtive-looking Demel—demon type—had seated himself beside me and was whispering to me, hand over his mouth.

"What do you want?" I demanded, instantly wary, remembering Alfad's warning.

"You're Morehead, ain'tcha?"

"So what?"

"Thought I recognized you. I'm Zurp."

"Zurp!" I half-rose off the bench. "You lousy doublecrossing little damned—"

I stopped in utter horror. What had I done?

ZURP cackled. "Don't worry, pal. Use His name in vain all you want. I figured you might blow your lid, so I clamped a temporal warp around us. This is all happening in a split-second. Don't even show on your record. For all anybody knows, you're just sitting there."

I clenched my fists and stalked him, getting my first good look at him as he circled me just beyond reach. He was a runt of a demon, with a sly face and a broken tusk; otherwise, he looked about like any other demon Demel.

"I'll break your neck," I growled.

"Now, now," he said, ducking a roundhouse. "I'm sorry about what happened."

"You're sorry!" I exploded. "I've just been through Hell and you say you're sorry!"

"You call that Hell?" Zurp cackled again. "Listen, in comparison to Hell, you were livin', man, livin'!"

He dodged a left hook.

"Look, take it easy, will you? I said I was sorry. I just forgot to tell you about Interim Sins—"

I measured him for a right to the kisser. "I just bet you're sorry. In a second, you'll have two broken tusks—"

"You'll break your hand," he warned me. "C'mon, will you? Cool down and listen. I got a proposition to offer—"

I cooled down, all right. Fast. It had suddenly occurred to me that I had only his word that all this wasn't going on my record.

"Not interested," I said. "Go away."

"You will be, if you'll just—"

"Scram. I don't want to hear it."

I sat down and closed my eyes, hoping he'd go away.

His voice was a little hurt. "Well, okay, Morehead . . . no offense. I just thought you might wanna get a crack at your wife and that guy Cramm before you get shipped Upstairs."

MY eyes flew open. He was standing in front of me, switching his tail disconsolately.

"Marianne?" I snapped. "And Cramm? You're damn right I'd like to—" I stopped short in mid-sentence. "Oh, no, you don't! I don't know what you're trying to pull, but you're not going to get my soul!"

He looked surprised. "Who wants your soul?"

"You do, you little stinker! You're a God damned lousy treacherous little demon, aren't you?"

He blinked. "Sure. Just calling me demon covers it. But that don't mean I'm after your soul, does it?"

"I think it does. I don't trust you. Get lost."

"Look." He edged a little closer.

"Listen to my proposition. That can't hurt you none, can it?"

"I don't know. Beat it!"

"It goes like this," he went on, squatting in front of me. "I got no desire to mess up your soul, see? We have more souls in Hell than we can torture right now. Long hours, no overtime—I should make it worse? Nope, it's just that I figure I owe you a favor, for forgetting to tip you off about Interim Sins. And there's another angle. The Big Boss—my Big Boss, I mean—figures that anybody who gets bumped off deserves a break and whoever done the job deserves a little Hell on Earth."

"Will you beat it?" I said, finding to my dismay that he had me interested.

"Just a second. Listen. You can ask any Demel here. Not only the demon Demels—ask an angel. Ask ten angels. They'll tell you my proposition won't hurt your soul none. Look, I'm trying to do you a favor—"

That did it. "Okay," I said grimly. "Make your pitch. I'll listen. Then I'll check on you so fast, it'll curl your tail!"

"Well, your wife and your neighbor bumped you, right? That's a sin. But maybe they don't die for a long time yet. So in the meantime the Big Boss likes to get in a lick or two, Hell being over-crowded like it is anyway. All you gotta do is say yes, and we'll shoot

you Earthside for an hour or so, and you can scare the living day-lights out of 'em, before you go on up to Heaven. Haunt 'em . . . know what I mean?"

I did. I liked the idea so much, my ghostly teeth grated. He saw it in my face.

"Well, you can. There ain't nothing in the Book—" he shuddered — "against scaring people. Like I say, ask any angel Demel. He'll tell you it's okay. Just harmless fun for you and the Big Boss gets in a little damnation ahead of time. Whaddya say?"

"Come on," I said. "I want to find out if you're leveling."

I walked toward the exit of the Waiting Room. Zurp trailed along, rubbing his hands. Somebody grabbed my seat on the bench. I didn't care. For a chance to put a bit of the fear of God into Marianne and Harry, Heaven could wait.

ALFAID said, "What this Demel says is perfectly true, Mr. Morehead. Such an arrangement has been made, by joint agreement—though mostly the souls who want to return Earthside have in mind a last glimpse of their loved ones or something on that order. But there's no technical objection to your making the trip in order to haunt your slayers, if you wish."

"How about that stuff about 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the

Lord'? I wouldn't be committing a sin, would I?"

"No. Frightening people can scarcely qualify as vengeance for their having murdered you, though a species of vengeance is undoubtedly your motive. I can't say that I approve, Mr. Morehead."

"You would if someone bad fed you poisoned chocolate."

"I suppose so. I can, and do, sympathize. But I don't approve."

"It's absolutely not against any rule?" I said. "It can't stop me from going to Heaven?"

"Correct."

"Then there's no danger in my doing it!"

He shook his head. "I didn't say that, Mr. Morehead. There's no danger in only *haunting* your wife and Mr. Cramm . . . but there is danger in accepting this demon Demel's proposal. Frankly, I believe he's trying to corrupt your soul—"

"I am not!" snapped Zurp.

"—and is counting." Alfad went on calmly, "on hidden pitfalls and unexpected opportunities for Interim Sinning—and there'll be many of them in the haunting process—to achieve his end. Remember, you're not yet in Eternal Abode. Any sins you commit will be recorded against you. I can't stop you from going, but if you do, I'd advise you to be very careful of what you do and say. Very careful indeed."

"Oh, I won't sin," I assured him grimly. "I'll just whoop and holler and bare my teeth and scare hell out of them—"

I hesitated, suddenly cold. Had I already sinned?

"That's quite all right," Alfad sighed. "We've been trying to scare Hell out of people for two thousand years. Anything you can do will be appreciated, I suppose. Just don't scare anyone out of a tenth floor window or under a truck. That would be a sin."

I nodded, still a little chilled.

"Ready?" asked Zurp gleefully.

"Hell itself couldn't stop me," I said.

"Hell itself is starting you," Alfad commented somberly. "Remember that."

Zurp made a motion with his left hand and his tail. "I'll give you a moment when your wife and Cramm are together," he said. "Have fun!"

Swish.

I WAS in my bedroom, in my house in Connecticut. It was night.

Marianne was in bed with Harry Cramm.

I expanded my ghostly chest. I couldn't have hoped for a better situation. So that was what Zurp had meant by "together."

Marianne saw me first. She gulped wildly, and Harry said muffledly, "Oh, peachums," and

then Marianne let out a shriek that must have deafened him for a week.

Harry reared up and saw me. "Oh, my God in Heaven!" he gasped, and, disengaging himself from vanished ecstasy, he disappeared under the covers.

I pranced toward the bed, waving my hands, fingers clawed, in front of me. I snarled. I chuckled.

I reached the edge of the bed and bent over, just as Harry's face emerged, as bleached as the sheet. My nose was about two inches from his. I snapped my teeth at his throat. He screamed and disappeared again.

Meanwhile, Marianne was threshing madly, trying to capture enough blankets to hide in. A tug of war developed between them.

I laughed hideously. They screeched. I clicked my teeth.

The bedroom door burst open. The maid rushed in, followed by the neighborhood cop—evidently they'd been enjoying themselves in the kitchen when the storm struck.

The maid took one look at me, gasped, "*Mon Dieu,*" and fainted. The cop's eyes widened until they showed white all around the pupils; I've read that, but I'd never seen it before. He pulled his service revolver and blasted away. I paid particular attention and noticed that he had clenched his fist until the knuckle actually showed white.



"Who killed me?" I boomed.

"Who murdered me?"

"Confess!"

It was all too much for Harry.

"We did it," he squawled. "I mean she did it. She poisoned his hot chocolate . . . I mean his hot chocolush . . . she did it! I don't know a thing about it!"

OH, it was wonderful. I could see the cop taking it all in, even as he emptied his gun at me.

Blam, blam, click, click, click.

He threw the gun at me.

I yelled at him: "Look at them! Look at my wife and neighbor! Not only do they murder me! Open adultery yet! Already he's in my house and my bed! And my wife—my own dear sweet loving wife—" And I move toward the bed and feinted as if to enjoy those very privileges which Harry had enjoyed a month ago as I lay dead on the bed. I didn't touch her, of course. That might be a sin, for all I knew.

My cup was overflowing.

I'll send Zurp a thank-you note, I thought.

Now I had only to wait for a Heavenly Messenger to pick me up and—

Swish.

Two Demels stood beside me. Two very burly-looking Demels. On their sleeves was the legend: SIN SQUAD.

"You're under arrest," one in-

toned. "Breach of Commandments IX and X."

The other grabbed my arm. "It's Hell for you, mec. Come along."

"Oh, no!" I yelled. "My God, it's impossible! I mean can't I expiate—"

"No second chance," said the first Demel. "If we did that, every soul in Hell would be hollering for a review. Come on!"

I was falling again. Far, far below, I could see the black bridge.

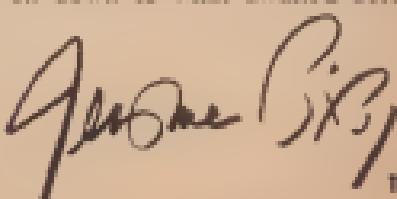
You just can't win, can you? My wife hadn't wasted any time burying me. And she hadn't wasted any time marrying Harry Cramm.

So I'd borne false witness against my neighbor. No adulterer, he—at least, at the time I'd accused him. And I'd coveted his wife.

ZURP was standing on the bridge, leaning against the sign that said: 5 MILES TO PURGATORY.

"Hiya, pal," he smirked as I approached, spinning. "Finally got back at you for tossing that holy water at me, didn't I?"

"Don't pal me, you two-bit Satan," I snarled, and zipped through the bridge and continued on down to what awaited below.



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